

THE GENIUS OF METHODISM

A Sociological Interpretation

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To Gertrude

CONTENTS

	Page
CHAPTER I—INTRODUCTION, - - - - -	7
CHAPTER II—THE MIND OF METHODISM.	
I. The Traditional Faith, - - - - -	15
II. The Articles of Religion, - - - - -	24
III. A Philosophy of Life, - - - - -	39
IV. Anticipations of Science, - - - - -	44
V. Rapid and General Acceptance, - - - - -	50
VI. Fixity of Type, - - - - -	58
CHAPTER III—THE GENESIS OF THE CHURCH.	
I. Primitive Societies, - - - - -	67
II. The Ecclesiastical Revolution, - - - - -	77
III. The Evolution, - - - - -	84
CHAPTER IV—EVOLUTION IN FORMS.	
I. The Dual Principles, - - - - -	89
II. Evolution through Formal Worship, - - - - -	92
III. Social Survivals, - - - - -	111
CHAPTER V—EVOLUTION IN GOVERNMENT.	
I. The Central Authority, - - - - -	123
II. The Geographical Modifications, - - - - -	128
III. Democratic Influences, - - - - -	137

	Page
CHAPTER VI—EVOLUTION IN ADMINISTRATION.	
I. The Episcopacy, - - - - -	153
II. Subsidiary Organizations, - - -	164
III. Intermediate Administration, - -	173
IV. The Ministry, - - - - -	179
V. Local Forms, - - - - -	189
CHAPTER VII—PROBLEMS OF MEMBERSHIP.	
I. Administration of Discipline, - -	197
II. The Social Assembly, - - - -	201
CHAPTER VIII—THE GREATER CHURCH.	
I. The Church Consciousness, - -	207
II. Consolidation of Benevolences, - -	223
III. Organic Union, - - - - -	231
CHAPTER IX—CULTURAL ISSUES.	
I. The Spiritual Problem, - - - -	243
II. The Intellectual Problem, - - -	259
CHAPTER X—THE PLACE OF THE METHODIST IDEA.	
I. World History, - - - - -	269
II. The Republication of the Record, -	276
III. The Interpretation of the Record, -	280
IV. Appropriation, - - - - -	284
APPENDIX.	

CHAPTER I.
INTRODUCTION.

INTRODUCTION.

A DISTINGUISHED Sociologist declares that the basis of society is a "consciousness of kind." This principle applies to all units of life, and mutually relates them in groups of increasing complexity, until the plane of human society is reached. By this same principle, also, the otherwise isolated human units are brought into definite relations. These relations at first proceed from the simplest and most obvious perceptions of kind, but by degrees, within the cruder forms of society, appear other and more intimate associations, based upon finer resemblances and distinctions. These human groups, whether in their primitive form or as the last product of æstheticism, have a common natural history. There is, first, the impulse or principle common to the group, which gives to members their common consciousness; there is, in the second place, the expression of that principle in forms

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

and institutions, which vary ever until the common element loses its vitality; then, in the third place, comes crystallization or disintegration.

Among the special groups in our modern society are the various religious denominations, each based upon a belief in, and an attitude toward, the mysteries of life, common to its individual members. Active principles such as these, of necessity have found expression in highly-organized institutions, or institutional groups.

Among these latter is Methodism. To the modern way of thinking, every phase of its development is the result of particular forces and the conditions of its past growth. An examination of this social evolution, therefore, will explain why certain modes and forms exist, rather than other and ideally superior ones. This is none other than a study in the form and power of Methodism.

Following such a study, it is natural to consider certain of the problems of the times. Forces which have wrought hitherto must continue their gradual unfolding; history, rather

INTRODUCTION.

than speculation, is the key to the future. No "deus ex machina" will unlock for us its door.

The discussion traverses a familiar ground, but in an unfamiliar way. The aim is not so much to recite facts, as to lay hold of the forces which induced them. Underneath all is a belief in the potencies of Methodism; a conviction that neither the era of crystallization nor disintegration is at hand, but that the continued activity of these forces must result in further and more elaborate development, commensurate with human need. For the creative power in this institution is spiritual and eternal.

CHAPTER II.

THE MIND OF METHODISM.

- I. THE TRADITIONAL FAITH.
- II. THE ARTICLES OF RELIGION.
- III. A PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE.
- IV. ANTICIPATIONS OF SCIENCE.
- V. RAPID AND GENERAL ACCEPTANCE.
- VI. FIXITY OF TYPE.

I.

THE TRADITIONAL FAITH.

The genius of Methodism has expressed itself most fully in three or four principal propositions; and in support of these ideas the intellect of the movement has manifested its highest qualities. Inspired by them, her bards sung in noble melodies whose strains yet re-echo around the world; moved by their sublimity, her preachers swayed human hearts at will, and thousands gathered in the amphitheaters of the hills to hear the new gospel; and transformed by them, institutions were cemented to endure for centuries. It is in these doctrines, which peculiarly characterize the movement, that the Genius of Methodism has most fully revealed itself.

Important as they were, these doctrines were nowhere formulated in exact language and authoritatively presented to the world as a test of faith. They are indeed incorporated into the

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

Catechism, but so also is much else of relative unimportance; they were carefully enunciated in Mr. Wesley's first Conferences, but by the time of the organization of the American Church these had become history. Their power was the power of tradition, of things which pass from man to man in conversation, sermon, or evanescent publication. They permeated song and prayer, and were expressed in vital phrases which yet tinge the religious speech of the people; as tradition embraces every department of thought and life, so these great doctrines dominated and determined Methodist activity and experience.

These doctrines were:—

The Universality of the Atonement;

The Witness of the Spirit;

Entire Sanctification.

Historically, the last idea holds first place; not, indeed, as an experience, but as a theory. When a few young men in England saw that they could not be saved without holiness, and consistently determined to seek therefor, a

THE MIND OF METHODISM.

mighty movement began. Holiness is a sublime but seemingly impractical ideal; none the less these men preached it as the essence of religion, and through agony of heart struggled toward it. That at last they found peace and a perfect love did not change, but only intensified, their message; hypothesis had been demonstrated by results, and to the ideal they added the formulas for its essential realization.

The success of Methodism is due primarily to the fact that it induced a vision which satisfied the human heart and fulfilled the promises of the Scriptures. The Bible seemed an arsenal from which to draw weapons of logic, and lent its authority to the new movement. Such preaching created aspirations in the breasts of men; here was something worthy all endeavor and all cost; before this glory all other considerations paled. When, then, the way to such a goal was told by travelers who themselves had tried it, multitudes hung in awed silence upon their words, and a nation was moved as by a mighty spirit.

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

Such lofty ideas were transmitted by the Wesleys to their lay preachers and helpers, and became the common heritage of the "people called Methodists." Of these things they sang, and for them prayed, or mutually exhorted, until the common purpose became a bond strong enough to constitute a fellowship markedly like that of the first Christians, and to render but trifling the worldly things surrendered for the sake of such glories; for, after all, the kingdom of heaven is as a man finding a pearl of great price for which he gives his all.

As a matter of fact these ideas, when translated into life, threatened to unbalance weaker minds; it required the strong common sense of the Wesleys, and a firm discipline, to save the movement from extravagance and fanaticism, and to anchor it safe in the harbor of fact.

This doctrine of holiness was transmitted in full power to the group of preachers under Asbury in America, and proclaimed by them, with the same effect, in the wilderness and upon village greens. As held by these men it was care-

THE MIND OF METHODISM.

fully discriminated. They preached the thing itself, rather than theories concerning it; they conceded all that their opponents could logically ask, insisting only that the Divine action upon the human soul might enable a man to live holily in this present life. From this they drew but one conclusion,—that men ought to submit themselves to God for such effective manifestation of his power. Such pleading was frequently irresistible; and in many places men yielded themselves so fully to the Divine will as to be able to testify to an experience which permitted no interpretation but that of holiness, and no description but that of perfect love.

The second particular doctrine which Methodism inculcated was the Witness of the Spirit. This term, despite the almost endless discussion which has been waged concerning it, is sufficiently definite. Its genesis is easily understood in the light of conditions then obtaining. In that day religion was largely an opinion or a philosophy, held with more or less regard to its practical consequences, or a creed to be professed

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

but not experienced. Methodism came with its insistence upon vital religion, preaching it as a fact of heart life, consciously known, definitely experienced. It held that such an experience is, in fact, the effective operation of the Divine Spirit upon the human, modifying natural aptitudes and inducing holiness in thought and act. Such an experience so clearly evidenced the reality of the Divine, that the term "witness of the Spirit" was happily applied to it from a single Scripture text.

Such a doctrine met a great need of that age, and lifted religion to a higher plane. Doubtless it worked hardship to timid souls, and to some whose prime genius was for law rather than for life; but as arousing a divine discontent by emphasizing a great spiritual privilege, it served a noble function. As a doctrine, however, it was roundly attacked; the whole energy of those whose religion was solely intellectual was turned against it; it was assaulted alike by scurrility and ingenious sophistry; but none the less it endured,—a spiritual Gibraltar. It determined

THE MIND OF METHODISM.

the standards of experience and the methods of worship; it gave definiteness and power to spirituality; it rendered comprehensible a great and otherwise elusive idea; it enabled common minds to grasp the realities of religion, and afforded tests by which spiritual progress could be gauged. It became, in short, the distinctive feature of practical Methodism.

The idea of the Universality of the Atonement entered the domain of theology from the practical side. Methodism insisted upon it, as opposed to the strict Calvinism then in vogue. We wonder now at the virulence of the famous controversy; but it held at that time a real significance. The only effective religious teaching had been within the circle of the Puritans, who received their theology from Geneva. The doctrine of an elect number predestined to salvation, and for whom the atonement in Christ was effective, was taught by them in all its grim power. The practical consequences were often spiritual arrogance on the one hand, and on the other spiritual despair on the part of those who could not

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

regard themselves as of the elect; while the great mass of men relapsed into indifference. Against such a condition the fervent spirit of the first Methodists urgently protested. But it was only as practical personal work revealed the widespread havoc of such an extreme theology, that they realized the full scope of the doctrine, and deliberately opposed it. Soon the conflict was on, and polemics raged; Scriptures were balanced, argument met argument, vehemence aroused virulence, good men were estranged, until it seemed that Methodism must become a theological system rather than an evangelical movement. That this crisis was passed in safety was due to two men,—to Mr. Wesley, who held the even tenor of his way and refused to swerve from gospel preaching to unprofitable debate; and to John Fletcher, whose sweet spirit and clear mind met and answered every argument in the light of pure reason. The victory rested with Methodism; for not only did she conserve her faith, but wonderfully modified that of her disputant, until evangelical religion everywhere

THE MIND OF METHODISM.

practically recognizes the universality of the atonement, conditioned only by individual acceptance.

In this controversy Methodism held herself true to the facts ; she perceived that earnest seekers after God found satisfaction ; there was no evidence of an artificial classification. She was true also to her divine inspiration to bring the Gospel to all men ; consulting the Bible under such circumstances, she found abundant confirmation. With renewed zeal she set herself to the world-wide, age-long task, and in this spirit sent her pioneers to answer the cry from across the seas.

There were other ideas for which Methodism stood, but these three towered as a giant trinity, and differentiated the movement from every other ; and at the same time so dominated its every phase, that Methodism took their intellectual and spiritual impress. In consequence of the first, she escaped from formalism of intellect or habit ; in consequence of the second, she preserved vitality and kept an open mind ; in

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

consequence of the third, she girdled the world in her endeavor to uplift fallen man by declaring the love and the power of God.

II.

THE ARTICLES OF RELIGION.

But the genius of Methodism can not be understood without an analysis of that body of formulated doctrine known as the Articles of Religion, which underlies its special tenets. These were not original with Methodism, but were retained by Mr. Wesley from the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, and had been first enunciated by the powerful and reverent mind of Archbishop Cranmer. They attempted to indicate a narrow line between contending factions, retaining as much as possible of the old Catholic faith, and yet making such concession to the spirit of reform as was necessary. Naturally much of this formulary dealt with peculiar problems of that day, and hence possessed an antiquarian rather than a permanent interest.

THE MIND OF METHODISM.

For this reason, and because certain portions inculcated doctrines which he could not sanction, Mr. Wesley, in drafting his fundamental law for the American Church, omitted certain Articles in their entirety and modified others,—sometimes in their phraseology, or again in the sense. These omissions, though not conclusive, are yet significant of the real tenor of the Methodist Mind, because they are based on theological conclusions previously reached and accepted by Methodists in general. It is indeed to be noted that the actual revision was Mr. Wesley's own work, but he was better able than any other man to express the real conceptions underlying the Methodist movement.

The following Articles were entirely omitted :

- III. Of the Going Down of Christ into Hell.
- VIII. Of the Creeds.
- XIII. Of Works Before Justification.
- XV. Of Christ Alone Without Sin.
- XVII. Of Predestination and Election.
- XVIII. Of Obtaining Eternal Salvation only by the Name of Christ.

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

- XX. Of the Authority of the Church.
- XXI. Of the Authority of General Councils.
- XXIII. Of Ministering in the Congregation.
- XXVI. Of the Unworthiness of Ministers which hinders not the Effect of the Sacraments.
- XXIX. Of the Wicked which eat not of the Body of Christ in the Use of the Lord's Supper.
- XXXIII. Of Excommunicated Persons.
- XXXV. Of the Homilies.
- XXXVI. Of consecration of Bishops and Ministers.
- XXXVII. Of the Power of Civil Magistrates.

These omissions fall naturally into four groups :

1. The first relates to the universality of the atonement, and relieves the doctrine of its predestinarian implications.

2. The second concerns the value and potency of the sacraments *per se*. This is emphatically

THE MIND OF METHODISM.

denied by Methodism, which thus eliminates the possibility of ritualism.

3. Certain Articles which define and emphasize the power and authority of the Church. This was based upon the exclusive value of "good works" as subsequent to justification, the peculiar value of the ritual, the monopoly of ministerial functions by regularly-ordained clergymen, and the power and validity of excommunication in all its consequences. This was all, as by a pen-stroke, denied and eliminated. These changes are in the direction of universality, and set the Methodist Mind free to recognize spiritual power wherever manifested, and to respond to spiritual intimations from any source of which reason may approve.

4. A few Articles were omitted because of reduplication. Thus Article III, on the Nicene Creed, is in substance incorporated in the preceding Articles in the revision. This may possibly denote a further emancipation from patristic influence; but further than this it has no theological significance.

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

In addition to these omissions a majority of the remaining Articles are more or less modified in order to render them consistent, and to free them from all that depends upon or logically sustains the doctrines which had been rejected. A few other changes were made: the conception of the resurrection was modified by eliminating a reference to "a body of flesh and bones;" the idea of the incarnation, by denying the Incarnate Word to be of the actual "substance of Mary;" the conception of the relation of the Son to the Father is altered by omitting the words, "begotten from everlasting of the Father." Original sin is saved from condemnation as a fault, and the fact of such sin is asserted without the elaboration found in the Thirty-nine Articles.

This body of negative conclusions may be summarized as follows: The Methodist Mind perceives a mystery in the temporal relation of the Father and Son; it rejects all possibility of Mariolatry; does not assert that Christ descended into Hades; does not insist upon the

THE MIND OF METHODISM.

Nicene Creed as in itself authoritative; it rejects the Apocrypha from the Canon; it neither holds that personal fault inheres in original sin nor attempts an explication of that idea; it believes in the acceptability of kindly human deeds and in the possibility of human holiness; it denies the absolute predestination of a given number of mortals by God's arbitrary choice; and denies also that the sacraments are in themselves efficacious.

The Methodist Mind perceives actual spirituality in men of unlike faith and practice, and hence denies that any Church is the exclusive keeper or interpreter of the Word; it believes that the gospel can be preached by any man of proper gifts under fitting circumstances; it emphatically rejects the idea of Sacramentarianism in its every form; it denies the power of excommunication, and would treat all men in a Christian spirit.

Thus from a mass of negative considerations the Methodist mind arises in definite outline and power; so that in good hope we may turn

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

to the positive elements in the Twenty-four Articles retained by Methodism. These fall naturally into five groups:

1. The Trinity, setting forth the usual orthodox conception, but with less detail.

2. The Scriptures (Articles V-VI). These Articles contain, first, a statement of the Canon, which includes "those books of whose authority there never was any doubt in the Church." To some minds the accuracy of this statement may seem open to question; but it is sufficiently succinct to make clear the position of the Church in accepting the thirty-nine Books of the Old Testament, and the twenty-seven of the New. In the second place, the Articles advance a theory of interpretation, and thus meet one of the urgent questions of present-day theology. When the Articles were adopted by the new Church the art of Biblical criticism as we now know it was but dawning, and most of the material which it uses was unknown. It is a matter for surprise that, under such conditions, there was adopted a formula broad enough to cover the discoveries

THE MIND OF METHODISM.

of the intervening years. The following points are to be noted :

a. The Articles advance no theory of inspiration, nor so much as affirm it as a fact. The wise and scholarly man who revised the Articles, fervent believer in the Scriptures, "*homo unius libri*," as he was, perceived that spiritual power was so manifest in the Books themselves that there was no need for fences and hedges of doctrine and formula to guard their sanctity, after the rabbinical manner. It sufficed to set this quality forth, and to assert—

b. The Holy Scriptures contain all things necessary to salvation. This certainly is a calm and moderate statement, which all ages can unhesitatingly indorse. The stream of spiritual endeavor rises early in human history, and flows in increasing power until it merges in the infinity of Divine Love through the revelation in Christ. The Scriptures are the product of this development; its every essential phase has posited its influence therein; it is a fair and adequate transcript of this evolution, and accessible

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

to all minds. Whatsoever theory does not harmonize with this mass of data is by that very fact disproven, as fails every geological hypothesis that belies the rocks.

c. It is not required by these Articles of Faith to believe literally all that the Scriptures assert. Every portion of Scripture must be considered and rationally interpreted, because every such portion is a fact, and as such requires rational explanation. Individual judgment is free to adopt that interpretation which seems best to harmonize the data.

d. The Old Testament is the foreshadowing of the New. Once this was held to be symbolical and allegorical; but it is possible now to perceive a deeper truth underlying this declaration. Spiritual truths dimly perceived, and spiritually sanctioned aspirations, were outworked in ritual and in popular life, and in the visions of the seers; these all find their consummation and fulfillment, as by natural law, in the full revelation of Christ.

One thing is clear,—this Article of Faith is

THE MIND OF METHODISM.

adamantine; as acceptable to every logical mind to-day as ever in the past; it is a marvelous anticipation of the needs of the twentieth century, a tribute to genius. The Methodist Mind is free to follow truth; it has no call to struggle with alleged heresies, and, giving thanks for this rich grace, may call on every science to throw on the search-lights, that darkness may everywhere be overcome.

3. Upon the basis of Scripture, so interpreted, the Methodist Mind erects its theology. It perceives that the ground sustains the conception of the Trinity which has long obtained, and passes thence to the "Person of Christ." He is perceived to be the Son of God, incarnate in Jesus under the full conditions of human life, and suffering death as a sacrifice for the sins of men. This raises the question of the Atonement. Unquestionably this was considered sacrificial and centering for its vital power in the death of Jesus on the cross, whereby, in some way, he made satisfaction for the guilt and sin of the whole world. This idea powerfully influ-

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

enced the Methodist imagination, and every phase in the Articles of Religion which alludes thereto was carefully conserved. At the same time, it is but true to the facts to add that this phase of the Atonement was never carefully reasoned by Mr. Wesley, or his fellow preachers; it was received by them from the past as a cardinal doctrine, which, as it never clashed with the observed facts of spiritual life, was never questioned. In our time, philosophic Christianity has questioned this emphasis upon the death of Jesus, and has sought to transfer it to his life. It is impossible, of course, to say whether, in view of new conceptions and developments, such an interpretation would have received the sanction of Mr. Wesley; however, he himself was certainly never barred from following the best thought he could attain by the mere phraseology of the Articles of Religion of the Church, which he acknowledged. The early Methodist Mind was never clear concerning the exact manner in which the sacrificial death of Jesus was made effective for all mankind. Theories ranged from

THE MIND OF METHODISM.

a commercial substitution to a foreshadowing of the later governmental theory; but they served more for illustration than for doctrine. Practically, and this was the dominant thought of Methodism, it was held that, through the death of Jesus, sinful men might approach Divinity and find redemption. Here was an idea which admitted of powerful presentation, and under the vigorous enforcement of circuit-riders swayed the minds of sin-burdened men, and brought them in anxious-seeking thousands to the feet of Jesus.

4. But Methodism saw most clearly and worked most effectively from the side of Anthropology. The Methodist Mind analyzed the human soul with rare skill and power, and, suiting its remedy to this diagnosis, effected the moral healing of the multitudes. The Articles of Religion affirm the following theses respecting man:

Human nature is morally corrupt.

Every man has actually sinned.

No man by his own power can do good or turn to God.

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

But deeds of human kindness are pleasing to God.
Regeneration is an actual change in man.
After regeneration a man may again transgress.
It is possible to live a holy life.

These propositions stand essentially unchanged; all the light which the careful observation of nearly two centuries has thrown upon spiritual problems has not tended to alter this analysis. By asserting the actual corruption of human nature, Methodism guarded its conception of original sin from Pelagianism, which would empty it of all significance; and, on the other hand, refrained from violating logic by imputing personal guilt thereto; and then, with singular modesty, described this corruption as that "whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually."

Consistently with this fact, Methodism asserted that all good deeds were done, not by human power, but by the helping grace of the Omnipresent Spirit. Good so done could not accrue to the credit of man,—hence falls the Catholic doctrine of the merit of good works;

THE MIND OF METHODISM.

but good works being done were in themselves evidence of such reciprocity with the spiritual, and hence pleasant to Deity, and not accursed, as the Thirty-nine Articles affirmed. The great truth which underlies this conception is that of a power everywhere present, and entirely adequate to overcome sin, and available to every man upon acceptance of Jesus as Lord. This, also, was proof of salvation by faith; subsequent to which, right living depended upon a continuance of those conditions which first induced it; and as the possibility of rejecting these conditions was always present, so they were to be condemned who held that, after regeneration, it was impossible for man to sin.

Having guarded the conception of holiness from this extravagance, Mr. Wesley protected it on the other hand by striking out the original Article which denied to men the possibility of living the Christ-life in purity and truth. Such a constant endeavor to avoid extremes and to strike a just balance is a characteristic of the Methodist Mind.

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

5. The last general division relates to the Church. Here keen common sense purges away useless and dangerous doctrines, and founds the institutions of the Church upon rational grounds. There is given a clear and succinct definition, which determines the further relations of the organization: "A congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance." Very naturally, then, is "speaking in an unknown tongue" forbidden, and the miraculous and mystical power of the sacrament denied: faith alone renders it effective; priesthood, as such, is thus rejected, for the sacrificial element is excluded. The ministry is exempted from peculiar laws of celibacy, and marriage placed upon a plane of sanctified reason. Yet decency and order require the use of appropriate rites and forms, and common sense requires the adhesion to them on the part of the membership of the Church. Individuality in property is recognized, and liberality inculcated.

THE MIND OF METHODISM.

Each of these propositions will well stand the test of reason, and by them the Methodist Mind commends itself to the great thought of the world.

III.

A PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE.

Every religion is in a sense a philosophy. It sums up the issues of life, and derives certain governing rules by which conduct is to be controlled. This is a function of philosophy. In one form or another, through the ages, two philosophical systems have contended for human allegiance; the fundamental thought of one has been "self-denial," of the other "temperance." Their historic forms and the arguments by which each creed has been justified are familiar: Cynics and Stoics long contended with Epicureans, and the same contentions reappear in other ages. It is an inevitable conflict, in which each man must choose his side, unless he yields his sovereignty to impulse, or is shut by circumstances in hard unyielding necessity. But the appeal of

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

religion as well as philosophy is, for the most part, to men whose circumstances allow a measure of self-direction; hence religions fall into one or another group, as indicated by this differentiating thought.

In this classification, primitive Methodism is easily placed; she followed closely the standard of self-denial. The reasons for this were potent, nor consistently with her ideals could she have done otherwise. Philosophical temperance has never been able to adhere to its ideal; little by little, temperance concedes more to personal desire. So the singularly normal ideas of Epicurus yielded gradually to that indulgence which, in time, stigmatized the name Epicurean. Precisely such a condition existed in England and America at the time of the Methodist movement. The Puritan idea had been lost in the reaction; the Anglican Reformation, at most but moderately spiritual, had been unable to stay this tendency. Moderation became intemperance, and liberty license; the whole land ran riot in its pursuit of pleasures, for the most part

THE MIND OF METHODISM.

gross and sensual. To cry moderation and temperance at such a time would have been idle. Sterner words, more rigorous ideals, were demanded. An instinctive appreciation of the conditions placed Methodism among the forces which stood for self-denial.

Her profound spiritual impulses tended in the same direction as well. Very clearly did her teachers understand that spiritual life is a struggle between divine suggestion and worldly allurements; a struggle for supremacy whose bitterness was but prolonged by compromise. In such a case, decision, self-denial, and renunciation were the profoundest wisdom. These conclusions of reason were enforced by observation. Again and again had fervent piety declined as men became entangled in affairs of the world. For example, it had been noted how costly attire quickened evil prepossessions, and even aroused latent sensuality; how indulgence of appetite strengthened such tendencies, and dulled fine spiritual vision; but, mostly, that things of this nature cumbered the ground, consumed time and

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

strength, developed a hundred trivial relations, innocent enough in themselves, but in their totality greatly restricting spiritual freedom and activity; and this when and where there was need of every workman, where the Christian soldier must be girded for a campaign, rather than enervated in enjoyment of past victories.

But Methodism never counted self-denial as itself a virtue, but only a means to such good activity as was incumbent upon Christians. If they were restrained from extravagance, it was only that more might be given to the needy; if social circumspection were required, it was that time and strength might be had for deeds of mercy. The single society in London mustered a company of one hundred volunteer visitors upon the sick; and this not for an emergency, but as a permanent institution. Indeed, Methodism was characterized by its deeds of mercy as prominently as by its spiritual activities. Her people visited the prisoners in the jails, ministered to the sick and aged, gathered the children in her schools and orphanages, antici-

THE MIND OF METHODISM.

pated modern methods of philanthropy, patterned themselves after the similitude of the Good Samaritan,—not asking questions of creed, but solely concerned with human need. Such activities saved self-denial from the bitterness and vacuity to which it is prone, exorcised the demon of self-righteousness which often enters the house swept free from its gauds, and preserved sweetness and sanity. Thus self-denial involved no unhappiness nor miserable self-renunciation; on the contrary, Methodists were a pre-eminently happy folk. Saved from vexatious worldliness, they found enjoyment in character and in spiritual pleasures; their religion brought them abundant peace and joy, and thus commended itself to thousands; self-denial was robbed of its ill savor and presented in a new light. It was seen to be identical with that phenomenon wherein a man seeking to be rich foregoes pleasure and indulgence, and concentrates his energies upon his business; or one desiring knowledge, denies himself relaxation, and consecrates himself to study, finding his

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

reward in the exquisite sense of new ideas. So the people called Methodists, desiring holiness, put aside all counter inclinations, and sought steadfastly for the desired haven, and found abundant felicity in the search and the attainment.

IV.

ANTICIPATIONS OF SCIENCE.

It is a characteristic of the Methodist Mind to consider religion from the view-point of experience. Its data are the result of spiritual empiricism; facts of life have been frankly acknowledged, and remedies sought that would produce verifiable results.

This attitude was shown first in relation to the Scriptures. These were acknowledged as transcripts of human experience. The appeal which they made to the heart was not to be evaded by idealization, thus placing them above common men; or by allegory, which could be made to sanction any code at will of the interpreter. Thus to Methodism the Scriptures ac-

THE MIND OF METHODISM.

quired a function which had been long ignored, and became an unerring guide to experience. To the study thereof her first leader brought a ripe scholarship, rare critical acumen, and sound judgment; his interpretations often anticipated the conclusions of modern scholars.

The standards of experience thus perceived were contrasted with actual attainments, and the discrepancies noted with scientific fidelity. Not by glossing over ugly emotions, not by emasculating the glory of the promises, did the first Methodists seek to justify their spiritual condition. The Holy Club at Oxford sought for holiness, and their constant penance and inward struggle revealed their dissatisfaction with themselves; with unerring analysis they gave plain names to the tempers which lurked within themselves, and to the marked tendencies of their time. They analyzed the soul as a modern chemist would a substance submitted to his judgment. On the basis of such conclusions they sought for better things.

When, then, this longing became reality, none

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

were better qualified than themselves to understand the true nature of the spiritual life which had begun in them; they best knew wherein it was differentiated from the religion of reason only, of stricture, or of ritualism; they perceived its essence, and carefully formulated the steps by which it had been attained. Thenceforward they preached as men who knew, and testified to facts of life definitely experienced. They found proof of their doctrine in new spiritual powers, in facts which were open to the investigation of all. Scripture had afforded them an hypothesis; but experimental verification had transmuted hypothesis into undoubted principle and law.

On such a basis they constructed an art of spirituality, in which many of them became wonderfully skilled. The primitive societies became spiritual schools, in which problems were discussed after the natural method of a later day; they were clinics, in which the actual experiences of men and women presented the cases. Thus was developed a power of dealing

THE MIND OF METHODISM.

with struggling souls, unsurpassed before or since.

The doctrines of Methodism were the outgrowth of empirical data; deduced therefrom, or thereby proven if controverted. They were simply the enunciation of the broad facts of human nature, perceived in contemporary life and correlated with the Scriptures.

In all this there is an anticipation of modern science. First of all as to method. Modern science is the result of the scientific method; is, in fact, a certain sort of "Methodism." Three cardinal elements appear in the methods of science,—observation, induction or hypothesis, and verification. It is precisely these three things which distinguish the intellectual mode of Methodism. She carefully observed the spiritual facts, collating and clarifying the same with rare skill. When this was done, tentative formulas were deduced; tradition was discarded, the dominant theologies were put aside; her tenets were to be founded on facts. Not less nobly did she turn to verification; however alluring the

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

proposition, it was first to be tested, and, if found wanting, to be frankly rejected. It was only when Methodism had thus tested her tenets that she taught them as truth; but having once accepted them, she held true to them at the risk even of martyrdom. Again and again said Wesley, "I can not deny the facts;" and often did he plead the facts as the sufficient justification of an idea. This is the spirit of science,—fidelity to truth which masters the world.

But if the anticipations of science are remarkable as respects the intellectual method, they are no less so in regard to the body of principles enunciated. Leading educators, essaying the prophetic, have declared that the religion of the future will be a spiritual psychology. Precisely this position was assumed by Methodism a century before psychology—spiritual or otherwise—had been at all bruited. Religion is the effective operation of the Divine Spirit upon the human; it is right and fitting to investigate these sacred processes, that we may know the truth. For more than a century and a half has

THE MIND OF METHODISM.

Methodism done this with all possible discrimination and with magnificent result. She has not only uplifted millions, but she has in the process amassed vast treasures of data, which must constitute the basis of the science of "spiritual psychology" when it comes.

In a third way has Methodism anticipated modern science. Philology has revolutionized our conception of the Bible; creeds formed in the past are in many cases antiquated by her disclosures; heresies, so called, rack many institutions. From all this has Methodism been saved, because she anticipated these disclosures of science. Her conception of the Scriptures is essentially modern,—“they contain all things essential to salvation.” “Whatever can not be proven by them is not required as an article of faith.” She interprets them as a transcript of life, exhibiting the spiritual possibilities of all men; hence discerns in them a sacredness and power that gives the Bible an indefeasible pre-eminence.

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

V.

RAPID AND GENERAL ACCEPTANCE.

Numerous religious movements in human history have developed great power and secured the adhesion of multitudes, transformed character, and eliminated from society a corruption which otherwise must have doomed it. Such a movement was Apostolic Christianity; in some respects that also under Arius among heathen tribes; so also history chronicles marked revivals under St. Francis and Peter Waldus, under Luther and John Knox. In the same class belongs Methodism, yielding to none in fervor, extent, efficiency, and persistency. Within fifty years, one hundred thousand persons were enrolled in its formal organization, while many times this number had been profoundly affected by its influences. At the close of another half century the number of members had been multiplied by ten, and in another fifty years almost by ten again. A growth so rapid, so unvarying, so extensive, is not surpassed in

THE MIND OF METHODISM.

history. What adds to the phenomenon is, that it is a triumph of spirit rather than organism; it marks the expanding influence of the Methodist idea. At the end of these one hundred and fifty years the Mind of Methodism is as distinct as ever, retaining its cardinal qualities, and hardly showing the mutations of time. Its essential power of propagation is unabated, and it exerts a powerful influence upon social ideals.

In these conditions there are two phenomena of rare interest,—the rapid and general acceptance of the Methodist idea, and the relative non-evolution of the Methodist Mind.

The rapid spread of Methodism is a world phenomenon, and hence can not be explained by local conditions. In England it has moved steadily to the front rank of the Dissenting Churches; in Canada it has likewise attained an enviable pre-eminence; in Australia it has combined to form an aggressive Church, numbering one in seven of the population; in the United States it totals six millions, with twice as many adherents, and far exceeds any other

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

Church in its constituency; in China and Japan it has increased its membership by ten per centum a year, and enrolls almost a quarter of the Protestant converts in those countries; in India it is almost overwhelmed by the demand upon its teaching and its nurture; it is strongly intrenched in Germany, Switzerland, and Scandinavia, and upon the Continent meets with increasing favor. Only among the Romance nations of Southern Europe and South America does it fail of its accustomed success; and even here bids fair ere long to overpass the barriers which have hitherto restricted it. Obviously the explanation of this expansion does not inhere in local conditions or racial aptitudes.

To begin with, Methodism is an instinctively missionary impulse; her appeal is to the whole world. Whatever limitations there are, are not of her own making, but lie in the nature of the case. Methodism has at all times evinced a profound consciousness of her destiny and function; knocking at all doors, she has found many to open, which less audacious evangelists would

THE MIND OF METHODISM.

have deemed it unwise to essay. This, however, but leads to the threshold of the problem,—Why have diverse peoples responded so readily to her appeal, and what is the secret of her power?

We turn our attention to the progress of Methodism in the United States, where her chief victories have been won. Conclusions reached from such a study may then be applied to the larger problem. A mental habit has in part been developed of attributing this to her superior economy under special Divine favor. But this is both unjust and evades the crux of the matter. The same phenomena occur under differing economies, and her social forms have been at once varying and at variance with democratic ideals, hindering rather than helping in the advance. On the other hand, even the most mystical piety does not conceive that Divine favor acts directly and without recourse to natural forces. The problem is to understand what these favored conditions are, in order that we intelligently accord ourselves with them.

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

The mass of mankind is not given to theory and speculation; religions whose nurture is chiefly doctrinal do not appeal to the popular mind. The unusual freedom from abstraction which characterizes Methodist theology—the acceptance without overmuch discussion of those truths concerning which the generality of Christendom is agreed, thus building on a broad foundation—has enabled Methodism to secure a hearing from all unbiased classes. Every theological distinction eliminates those who hold the contrary view, and thus narrows the constituency. With singular wisdom, Methodism avoided this error, and rejected from its creed every debatable issue, unless it were vital to its purpose. Dislike of theology has its positive side in love of fact. On this point also Methodism has met the popular mind. Her entire scheme of theology is based upon fact as perceived; it is concrete, something that the mind can readily apprehend; it is the “demonstration of the Spirit.” This quality has produced conviction where logic has failed; has attracted

THE MIND OF METHODISM.

popular attention where elegant oratory and profound thought have been ignored. Methodism met the mass of mankind upon their own ground, dealt with them after their own manner, and argued with them in syllogisms of their own. In her presentation, religion was as evident to the observer as to the convert; hence would spread at times in ever-increasing power, until the cumulative evidence had won all minds within the range of its influence which were capable of response to such presentation. These "revivals" were the logical result of the genius of Methodism.

The emphasis of Methodism upon ideals voiced a longing of humanity. It were not worth while much to sacrifice to attain a religion which burdened the soul with constant spiritual stress; but it was quite another thing to attain one, whose goal—visible and feasible—was perfect love. This ideal was brought within the range of the practical by a wise emphasis upon "the power, not ourselves, that works for righteousness." Discouraged and despairing

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

hearts revived under the influence of such an idea. What was impossible to man was clearly possible to the Divine Spirit; and the demonstration of this induced even degenerate and abandoned men to essay the new life.

Her general philosophy of life contributed not a little to the same result. The generality of mankind must perforce deny themselves luxuries; they may have desire for them, or in their hearts have envy for the more fortunate, but the fact remains; and joy, if it comes, must journey along other avenues. Methodism put herself in sympathy with this mood by her view of life; she opened new resources to multitudes; unfolded a spiritual, and in only a less degree an intellectual, enjoyment that had been unsuspected, and which was easily accessible to all men,—more so, indeed, to the poor than to the rich. She gave contentment amid inexorable conditions, and her fundamental conceptions were thus singularly adapted to the needs of men, particularly in a new country, where privations were many and resources few.

THE MIND OF METHODISM.

Here also lies the explanation of a present-day fact, which has not a little troubled many minds,—the relative absence from the Methodist communion of rich men and of that form of culture which is conditioned by wealth. This is an obvious consequence of the appeal which she has made to those classes which are deprived of such things, and her more or less tenacious insistence that rich as well as poor shall subscribe to her philosophy of life. Thus, while heredity or spiritual affiliation has at times counterbalanced social ties, the genius of Methodism makes it certain that these are exceptional instances, and forbids the hope, if hope it be, that any large number of the rich will remain subject to her conditions.

The influences which we have thus analyzed are seen to appeal to the practical sense, rather than to the imagination; to the common reason, rather than the theoretical; to the ethical, rather than the æsthetic; and hence must be most efficient where such qualities are dominant in class or race. Consequently, Methodism has had but

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

little success among the Romance nations. It is not a question of superior excellence, but of temperament; and in the matter of genius there are limitations. Wherever the practical temperament, touched with emotional qualities abounds—and this in general is the case—Methodism has met with gratifying responses. We find the secret of this expansion to consist, not in superior adaptation of economy, not wholly in a fervent missionary spirit, but in the fact that the Mind of Methodism is the mind of the average man, touched to fervent piety by communion with the Divine.

VI.

RELATIVE FIXITY OF TYPE.

During the last generation the hypothesis of evolution has been applied to nature and human society, and generally with astonishing results. Modifications which have appeared from time to time have been interpreted by the formula, “conformity to environment,” which summarizes those forces which act upon the individual

THE MIND OF METHODISM.

from without. By reason of this hypothesis many things once inscrutable become clear, and social progress is made intelligible. A changing environment requires as its corollary a change in particulars. This general requirement is largely borne out by the facts. It is a commonplace that the last hundred years have witnessed more social changes than many centuries preceding combined. In common with these transformations, theologies and ecclesiastical systems have been modified until, in some cases, they bear little resemblance to their prototypes. But when we turn to the Mind of Methodism, we find an exception so singular that it becomes a phenomenon of non-evolution. It is not meant, indeed, that the Methodist Mind has resisted all external influences and evinced no modification whatever—for this would both be untrue to the facts and would imply sad lifelessness—but, in contrast with contemporary religious types, the changes are insignificant, and their relative unimportance requires an explanation.

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

However, it is first necessary to understand what the changes are which have been made to the changing environment. It is at once suggested that the philosophy of life has undergone a change. Rigid self-denial is not only exceptional, but is scarcely inculcated; a measure of personal indulgence in dress, tastes, and pleasures is permitted, that seems in striking contrast with primitive Methodism. But this contrast may be overestimated easily; its real significance is to be ascertained in relation to the standards of life. It may be said fairly that these have risen in a corresponding degree, so that the relation of the Methodist idea to the general life is unchanged. If this be so, the evolution is more apparent than real, and the idea of a self-denial approximating the average of civilization is intact. More than this savors of self-righteousness, and is neither demanded by the real spirit of Methodism, nor was it practiced by her founders. The details have changed, but not the philosophy. In a congested civilization, recreation takes new forms;

THE MIND OF METHODISM.

individual pleasures become social; the village green yields to the athletic park and the auditorium. Methodism, however, has moved but slowly with this current, and has resisted rather than accelerated the movement.

A second seeming evolution is in terminology and spiritual type. Early Methodism presented certain well-defined types of religious experience, and confined her formulas to an analysis of these types. To-day these particular modes of experience, while common enough, are far from universal, and many other types are recognized. The real insistence of Methodism has been upon a vital spirituality, manifested in experience. Naturally the manifestations of that spirituality would at first be simple; then, by the law of growth, more complex. Methodism derived her formulas from observation; hence with the development of further spiritual types, unless her method were abandoned, must her method become broader and more comprehensive. All this involved no deviation from the Methodist idea, but rather was its logical

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

fulfillment. Thus insistence was still upon a vital experience, though it might be gradually developed rather than suddenly attained; holiness and perfect love remained as the ideal, though growth was emphasized rather than the instantaneous operation of the Spirit, because growth was perceived to be the natural method.

In other respects Methodism is essentially unchanged as a mental state. Her theology is unmodified, and her great ideas and purposes are unaltered. This in the face of changing theologies on every side, and a wondrously different civilization. In part, this is due to the simplicity of her general creed, which deals only with those essential things which had stood the test of centuries, and hence were liable still to endure. In part it is due to the anticipation of the scientific method, which rendered it probable that conclusions based thereon would harmonize with the results attained by the same method in other fields of investigation; and since recent progress in civilization is primarily the result of the advancement of science

THE MIND OF METHODISM.

the Methodist Mind has maintained itself unchanged.

But the underlying philosophy is deeper still. In evolution there are two forces,—the mutable and the immutable; the universe and the Creator; the modified and the Modifier. Through æons does creation pass through countless transformation ever approximating a fixed goal—a permanent type—which is the Perfect. When this approximation becomes exact we have truth and harmony. Moral harmony is perfect love.

Methodism, observing the spiritual conditions which result in such moral harmony, derived formulas which very closely approximate spiritual truth, and declared them to the world. Hence the Mind of Methodism very closely approximates the thought of God, and hence has been, and will be, largely conserved from the mutations of time.

It is necessary here to observe that this analysis deals with the impulse or genius of Methodism, and not with its actual attainments, for these are a complex of the ideal and the imper-

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

fect material upon which the ideal acts. But philosophically the distinction is real and essential to an understanding of Methodist evolution.

Such are the cardinal elements of the Methodist Mind. Piety, practicality, spirituality, all unite in a harmony which has held the attention of millions, and made them devotees.

CHAPTER III.

THE GENESIS OF THE CHURCH.

- I. THE PRIMITIVE SOCIETIES.
- II. THE ECCLESIASTICAL REVOLUTION.
- III. THE EVOLUTION.

I.

THE PRIMITIVE SOCIETIES.

The Methodist Episcopal Church presents as clear an example of the evolution of a social organism as any in history. It develops from extreme simplicity to an ever-increasing complexity of function and relation. This evolution is open to observation in every part; there are no missing links, and the consequences of every new element can be easily traced.

The original motive of Methodism was a compound of a few simple ideas which had acted powerfully upon a small group of men; these in turn, by their genius and influence, impressed their new conceptions upon numbers of their fellows, and thus developed a general impulse which found expression in a great social movement. The master mind of the movement has enunciated these simple ideas: "Men can not be saved without holiness; . . . men are jus-

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

tified before they are sanctified.” Herein is expressed the appeal which eternity makes to the soul, the entire problem of individual holiness, and the relation of the human to the Divine. These great conceptions were expressed so simply as to act with power upon minds incapable of philosophical reflection, as well as upon those capable of the widest range of thought. They gave rise to an irresistible longing for that holiness which has been the precondition of salvation; so strong, indeed, was this emotion that some seemed to see the wrath to come hanging continually over their heads.

Such ideas, so held, resulted in action. Accordingly, in the latter part of 1739, a number of persons came to Mr. Wesley in London and desired of him such advice as befitted their condition. In order to answer their request more efficiently, he appointed Thursday evening of each week as the time for them to come together; thus arose what were called the “United Societies.” Such a society was “a company of men, having the form and seeking the power of god-

THE GENESIS OF THE CHURCH.

liness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other work out their salvation."

Every aspect of this organization is patriarchal. A group of men and women recognized Mr. Wesley as their spiritual father, and received his counsel and advice as law. They were at liberty to sever their connection whenever they would, but so long as they remained they were required to accept his authority.

The societies so formed were practically without ecclesiastical functions or pretensions;* nor did they acquire these in any large degree until their organic relation to Mr. Wesley ceased. This fact is of importance, as it ex-

*"The account here given of the nature, and design of a Methodist Society differs essentially from the definitions hitherto given of a Church. There is no mention of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which was never administered except in a few of the larger societies, and then by a regular clergyman. The members were desired to attend this ordinance at the respective places of worship to which they belonged, and thereby continue their former Church fellowship." (Whitehead's Life of Wesley, Vol. II, p. 101.)

Among the rules given members of the "bands" was this. "To be at Church and at the Lord's Table every week." (Directions given to the Band Societies, III, 1.)

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

plains much of the subsequent development of the movement. Mr. Wesley and his brother continued clergymen of the Established Church, and their assistant preachers were regarded as lay helpers, unless holding orders in the Church of England. The sacraments were never administered among the societies except by ordained clergymen, and attendance upon the regular sacramental occasions in the Churches was urged upon the members of the societies, and even embodied in a General Rule. As a general policy, the society meetings were not allowed to conflict with the Established services; in every possible way was it declared that these societies exercised supplementary functions, and were formed for the cultivation of individual spiritual life.

All the plans and methods were devised because they tended to develop individual spirituality, or were the natural expression of a spiritual mind. The general meetings of the society consisted of pointed advice and exhortation, the confession of faults, and prayer for spiritual

THE GENESIS OF THE CHURCH.

comfort and strength. Obviously such personal and sacred functions could not be publicly performed; hence every alternate meeting was in secret;* nor could any attend the open meeting of the societies more than a few times unless they declared their purpose to unite with the society. The conditions of membership were simple but stringent, and required constant discipline for their maintenance. To this end was devised the system of classes and class-meetings. At the end of each quarter those faithful in attendance upon each class were given the tickets which admitted them to the love-feast and to the general sessions of the society.

*The Methodist societies held four distinct kinds of meetings. The first was public evangelistic services, held in chapels, houses, the open air, or in whatever place offered. The second was the meeting of the members themselves in General Society, usually once a week. The third was group meetings in classes or bands. The fourth the quarterly love-feast. Respecting the General Society meeting, the "Minutes of 1770" say:

"Q. How often shall we permit strangers to be present at the meeting of the society ?

"A. At every other meeting of the society in every place let no stranger be admitted. At other times, they may ; but the same person not above twice or thrice. In order to this, see that all in every place show their tickets before they come in. If the stewards and leaders are not exact herein, employ others that have more resolution."

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

As the membership increased it was subdivided into "bands" for men and women and for penitents and mature Christians, that counsel and advice might be more pertinent and personal. Plans were also devised for the expression of Christian impulses in various forms of charity and social help. When the progress of the work necessitated the erection of buildings and the holding of property, appropriate financial supervision was inaugurated.

All these plans and modifications, however, suggested in counsel or fellowship, became operative solely by the fiat of Mr. Wesley; the power of government resided in him.

It is necessary to discriminate between the Methodist societies and the New Evangelism of that day. The one was a matter of organism, the other a moral and spiritual influence; the one was directly under the control of Mr. Wesley, the other had a wider origin and scope, and was at times conducted, not only independently of Mr. Wesley, but occasionally in antagonism to him. The first is a definite form into which

THE GENESIS OF THE CHURCH.

a portion of this renaissance crystallized; the second was one of the great spiritual movements which from time to time have swept over the world, and assumed various forms. Monasticism, the Crusaders, the Itinerant Friars, the Reformation, Puritanism, and lastly Methodism, are all akin in their inception. Organic Methodism was but one of the results of a great spiritual upheaval. The Itineracy, field-preaching, great revivals, all occurred apart from the work of Mr. Wesley; but so much of these as fell within his influence was by his genius constituted into the semi-secret organizations already outlined, and thus preserved from that disintegration which is the fate of inorganic enthusiasm.

The great revival opened the way for the formation of classes outside of London. Organizations were soon effected upon the same terms at Bristol, Kingswood, Newcastle-on-Tyne, and in rapid sequence elsewhere. The numbers enrolled in the several societies varied from a mere handful to nearly a thousand, or even more, as

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

in London. This development gave rise to new problems and new forms. It was impossible for Mr. Wesley personally to advise and supervise the societies in the several places; accordingly, exercising his best judgment, but following providential indications, he designated certain persons to assist him as "helpers." As the work grew it became necessary for him to appoint supervisors over these local helpers. These men did their most effective work as evangelists, but their organic status was that of superintendents and examiners of the societies, holding for the nonce the place of Mr. Wesley himself.

For the solution of these problems, and many others of a doctrinal, spiritual, or practical nature, Mr. Wesley was accustomed to call together for conference a number of preachers,—among them some of his assistants, and others from the clergymen of the Established Church who sympathized with the growing movement. After free and ample discussion, Mr. Wesley summed up the sense of the Conference in his own words for the edification of the societies;

THE GENESIS OF THE CHURCH.

thus giving it a finality and authority; but this authority, as he expressly stipulated, arose from his own sanction, and not from any power lodged in the Conference *per se*. Events, however, soon brought these Conferences into vital and practical relations to the societies themselves. The rapid spread of the movement made necessary some tie or bond which should mutually relate the several local organizations. At first it was proposed that the society in London should be regarded as the parent body, and the others related thereto as branches. But this was a supposition contrary to fact, and was not acceptable. It was obvious that the vital relation was through Mr. Wesley himself, and not otherwise. Hence the Conferences between himself, his assistants, and his friends, became the principal medium by which the societies were kept in a harmonious interaction; thus the Conference attained a place in the Methodist organism which was distinctive, indispensable, and possessed of latent authority.

With the passage of years, Mr. Wesley him-

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

self recognized this function of the Conference, and with rare prescience understood that, whether he wished it so or not, in all human probability the authority he wielded would upon his decease devolve upon the Conference. All that he could do was to determine, as he had done from the first, the nature of the governing Conference.

Such was the Methodist organism as it expanded under the influence of Mr. Wesley. It was preserved by his wisdom from fanaticism on the one hand, and tyranny on the other; and aided by his spiritual power to its simple task of spiritual culture, and so saved from formality.

His genius, which was practical in an even greater degree than it was spiritual, improved the unusual advantages of a long life to impress his ideas and methods upon the thousands who, from love and devotion to him, were plastic to his will.

THE GENESIS OF THE CHURCH.

II.

THE ECCLESIASTICAL REVOLUTION.

The organization which has been described, possessed a wonderful vitality and a rare adaptability to conditions. It could be inaugurated wherever a handful of people, so disposed, came together; it was primarily an "association" of spiritually-minded people. It is consistent with its genius that in a new country Methodism spontaneously sprung into existence. This occurred in Maryland under the preaching of Robert Strawbridge, about 1765; and almost simultaneously and independently in New York City in 1766 under the leading of Philip Embury and Barbara Heck.

The American Methodism thus originated followed the primitive pattern, and was sanctioned by a wonderful success. A little later Mr. Wesley appointed a number of preachers to the new work, and advised and directed them from time to time, as circumstances permitted. In the nature of things this advice was but oc-

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

casional, and the new movement was largely under the direction of men who were upon the ground. To many of them Mr. Wesley was but a name, and this circumstance, together with the attitude assumed by him respecting the war which shortly ensued, prepared the way for the great revolution.

Other circumstances also conspired. The Revolutionary War reduced religion to a sad state; not only did the natural reaction of war and bloodshed affect conditions, but a very large number of clergymen under the English Church had abandoned their parishes and returned to England; the people were without preaching, and destitute of the sacraments. The natural recourse of Methodism to the Established Church was no longer possible. Nor did the actual presence of "dissenting" ministers alleviate the situation; for the echoes of the great strife between the Independent clergymen, representing Calvinism, and the enthusiastic Arminianism of the Methodists still reverberated; comity was as yet impracticable.

THE GENESIS OF THE CHURCH.

Mr. Wesley met the situation by a sublime self-denial and originality. He severed the bonds which related the American societies to himself, and, with his blessing, gave them a Church Constitution wrought out by sixty years of study and thought. He daringly ordained a fellow presbyter of the English Church as "superintendent." Nor does it detract from the greatness of this act that once and again he complained of its natural consequences—that, in a manner not contemplated by himself, he was deposed from his advisory office; that the American preachers boldly named an office to which he had assigned episcopal functions. These were but natural regrets, and testify to the greatness of the mind which, despite these prepossessions, firmly adhered to its highest conceptions.

Upon the call of Mr. Wesley's representative, about seventy preachers assembled in Baltimore at Christmas-tide, 1784. With singular unanimity they adopted the Constitution with the Book of Forms, and, on motion of John Dickins,

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

assumed the name of "The Methodist Episcopal Church." This was indeed a revolution! Peacefully wrought, and in decency and order; an adequate response to the needs of the time; and yet, for all this, modifying every important element which had characterized the primitive movement; in a brief time, the purposes, basis, and form of the organism were transformed. The true significance of this Christmas Conference has been overlooked. Commonly it has been conceived as a continuation of the old Methodism; a new epoch but not a new institution. The truth, however, appears when we parallel the action of this Conference with the condition of the primitive societies:

THE SOCIETIES.

1. The societies had a simple doctrinal basis.

2. A member did not sever his relation to any Church by joining a society.

THE CHURCH.

1. The Methodism added thereto a résumé of Christian faith in twenty-five "Articles of Religion."

2. Membership took the place of previously existing Church relations.

THE GENESIS OF THE CHURCH.

THE SOCIETIES.

3. The societies made no pretensions to ecclesiastical functions, and expressly disclaimed any such purpose.

4. The entire governing power resided in Mr. Wesley.

5. The societies were explicitly for spiritual culture, and every activity grew out of this purpose.

THE CHURCH.

3. The new Methodism was explicitly and definitely a Church, exercising all the functions of the same.

4. The relation of Mr. Wesley was severed and the governing power in its entirety devolved upon the Conference.

5. The Church added ecclesiastical functions, which became at length determinative of every form of activity.

These points of divergence are precisely those which were distinctive of the primitive societies; hence, organically, the revolution was so sweeping as to give rise to the question, What remained of the primitive movement? Nothing remained except the traditions and spirit, and for a time the local forms; this is to say, indeed, that the motive power continued unchanged. Spiritual fervor, evangelistic zeal, disciplinary methods, all that constituted the soul of the movement, survived; these essential elements are the same in the two Methodisms.

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

It was the organism which was the subject of the revolution.

The entire governing power came to reside in the Conference as the successor of Mr. Wesley.

Mr. Wesley had anticipated such a consummation in the event of his decease, and what had occurred was logically the same. Thus the Conference acquired, not only a definite function and recognition, but assumed the supreme place in the organism. For convenience, it might and did delegate its power to individuals; but the "Bishops" stood in responsible relations to the body which created them. The Conference evolved into unexpected forms under the stress of expansion and democratic sentiment.

A Church was defined by Mr. Wesley—following the Anglican creed—as a "congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached and the sacraments duly administered, according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that are of necessity requisite to the same." Hence, in becoming a Church and in incorporating the foregoing definition into its

THE GENESIS OF THE CHURCH.

Constitution, the new Methodism incurred obligations superior even to its former distinctive purpose. It was no longer sufficient to cultivate spirituality, but necessary also to provide stated preaching and the regular administration of the sacraments. Thus Methodism assumed a place in the organization of Christian civilization. The response made to this new obligation was obviously separable from its previous function, and a duality of purpose resulted. The history of institutions shows that two separate functions never have been long discharged with equal zeal and efficiency; sooner or later the balance fails, and the organism becomes one thing primarily and the other incidentally. It is true, indeed, that the founders of the Church did not anticipate this inevitable development, but none the less has it been a determining factor in the evolution of the social forms of Methodism.

The adoption of the Articles of Religion and the forms of sacramental observance and ordination gave to Methodism a body of doctrine which it had previously lacked. It is true, indeed,

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

that the Articles were more general in their nature than is usual with theological systems; none the less, with the Wesleyan traditions, oral and written, they constituted a faith differentiated sharply from Calvinism on the one hand and Sacramentarianism on the other. Hence they presented a well-defined intellectual pose, which in the future, limited—and intensified by such a limitation—the intellectual life of the Church, producing at last the Methodist type of mind, which, by a peculiar combination of circumstances, has been modified but little with the passage of the years.

III.

THE EVOLUTION.

The years since the revolution of organic Methodism have been years of evolution. The germ of all present forms was in the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1784, though not in the previously existing societies. We have but to observe the unfolding of these latent qualities under the influence of definite forces.

THE GENESIS OF THE CHURCH.

Three forces have determined this evolution; one acting from within, two from without. The inner force is a latent ecclesiasticism,—a term that comprehends those things which differentiate a church from a simple spiritual association. The first outer force is the expansion of the environing civilization, both in geographical extent and in intellectual and material attainments; the second is the democratic idea, which, as characteristic of American social life, reacted powerfully upon the patriarchal and oligarchic government of the Church.

This evolution affected the organism as a whole, but for the convenience of study it may be considered in its subordinate relations.

CHAPTER IV.

EVOLUTION IN FORMS.

- I. THE DUAL PRINCIPLES.
- II. EVOLUTION THROUGH FORMAL WORSHIP.
- III. SOCIAL SURVIVALS.

I.

THE DUAL PRINCIPLES.

The Methodist Church is based upon dual principles, the two phases of spiritual culture. One of these, which created the primitive organism, may be called the social element; it involves the association of men together for fellowship, counsel, mutual help,—both spiritual and material,—and for the expression of common benevolent impulses; constituting, in a very exact sense of the term, a society. It was under the influence of this idea that the General Societies assumed their form and condition prior to the ecclesiastical revolution of 1784.

The other idea is that of worship, involving as its basis an adequate suggestion of the great conceptions which are associated with the thought of Deity. It is one of the fundamental principles of society and affects every civilization. Primitive peoples have been satisfied with

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

the solemnity of the great wood or of the mountains, the glory of the sunrise, and kindred phenomena of nature; but as the conditions of life become more artificial, these resources fail, and recourse must be had to things of man's devising; temples are builded, elaborate rituals are devised, and myths and supernatural stories convey to the imagination the required impressions.

These tendencies of worship are so fixed in human nature that Christianity has not only failed to eradicate them, but has, in fact, grandly accentuated their development. Her cathedrals, her rituals, her organs and solemn music, are illustrations in point. In this phase of religion, all men share to a certain degree by virtue of their social relations. State functions upon which the Divine blessing is invoked; the solemnization of matrimony; above all, the obsequies over the dead, are well-nigh universal. More optional with the individual is participation in the periodical and definite forms of worship in the sanctuary and temple; yet few,

EVOLUTION IN FORMS.

indeed, are wholly careless of these. Philosophers have long recognized this function of worship in developing national character and conserving institutions; so vital is it that ecclesiastical decadence has ever been a prelude to social ruin.

The office of religion, which centers in worshipful recognition of the Divine and expresses itself in solemn forms, may be described as its function of "formal worship."

In the civilization where Methodism originated, these functions were already filled by an elaborate provision of the State. Great cathedrals, antique chapels, a regular priesthood, a ritual that for beauty and simplicity has never been surpassed, were all at hand. So Methodism contented herself with requiring an "attendance upon all the ordinances of God; such as the public worship of God, the ministry of the Word, either read or expounded, and the Supper of the Lord," inculcating by her whole authority the use of those forms of worship within the reach of every man.

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

The revolution of 1784 placed this function upon the infant Church, and under its influence the primitive forms were greatly modified.

II.

EVOLUTION THROUGH FORMAL WORSHIP.

One of the influences which led to the organization of the Church in 1784 was the necessity of providing for the sacraments. The war for independence led to the withdrawal from the country of many of the regular clergymen, and this, in connection with the religious decline, which is the usual accompaniment of war, produced a lamentable condition. In places every condition and custom of worship was abandoned, and the people were left destitute of spiritual ministrations. The Methodist itinerants did indeed bring a measure of spiritual culture, and provided the means for the general oversight of their converts; but it was strongly felt that the more formal elements of worship were also required.

EVOLUTION IN FORMS.

In answer to this demand, thirteen elders and a number of deacons were ordained at the Christmas Conference, and sent forth to administer to the needs of given districts. This was the first important contribution of the new element to the general evolution of the Church; for out of it developed, as by natural laws, the institution of the Presiding Eldership; for an elder so ordained was naturally premier preacher upon his circuit, and possessed an oversight with reference to his junior brethren. Upon him devolved not only the regular administration of the sacraments—a custom that in part still survives, a testimony to the origin of the office—but other administrative duties, which gradually became definite.

The early Church was also provided with a regular ritual and form of service for the several gatherings of the Church; it was at first suggested that ministers should wear the surplice of the Anglican clergy, and in other ways the idea of worship was emphasized. But the times were not ripe for this, nor did the con-

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

ditions permit. Indeed Asbury ventured to wear the surplice only once or twice, the preachers hardly at all. The crude meeting-houses, the exigencies of open-air services, and other difficulties incident to pioneer evangelism, soon eliminated the formal elements.

Indeed it was long before the pre-conditions of formal worship were developed. The generality of the population lived too near nature, and found in her ministrations an unconscious answer to their sense of awe and devotion. Dwellers in the great woods, witnesses of the yearly miracle of nature's resurrection, found in their environment the stimulus to worship, the incentive to aspiration, which under more artificial conditions require to be consciously cultivated; so that, having provided for the sacraments, the Church seemed for the time to have done its full duty. In consequence its first development followed the primitive social lines.

It was in the South, whose regnant civilization had nurtured a more aristocratic growth, that the formal principle secured its first great

EVOLUTION IN FORMS.

manifestation. The type of mind of the Southern gentleman lent itself naturally to a certain pomp of circumstance, and, while civilization was nearer the patriarchal type than the feudal, the Church early responded to these subtle influences. By this quality Methodism was set in relation to the civilization of that section. In the North it was still individualistic, cultivating the spirituality of man as man, and not unduly concerned with the community as a whole. In the South, Methodism was practically without a rival, while in the North other Churches competed with and even antagonized her influence. Thus in the South there developed what may be termed an essential contract between the community and the Church. The functions of social worship were placed in the hands of the latter, and a cordial support was accorded to her enterprises. Thus unconsciously was Methodism bound to minister to the formal needs of that people, and tacitly debarred from any course that would hinder in the fulfillment of such a function. The relation of the Church to the

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

community was most cordial; at her altars worshiped the statesmen, social leaders, and influential persons of the land. Her influence upon them was very great, and essentially in harmony with Methodist traditions; her great doctrines were faithfully preached, and her institutions carefully conserved. The reciprocity was complete. This enables us to understand why Southern Methodists upheld slavery, and hence explains the ultimate breach.*

In the North and West the Church still retained her primitive character. A few places insisted on more frequent observance of the sacraments and upon a more formal worship, involving the development of an increasing number of stations and a discrimination between

*History makes it very clear that the Methodist Episcopal Church divided on the question of slavery; but the more important question deals with the reason why they differed on this question: not because the spiritual life of the brethren in the one section was more advanced than in the other; not because the North was dominantly opposed to slavery; but in the North righteousness was individual, and the Church was not related to the civilization. In the South the reverse conditions obtained; and men received their interpretations of spirituality from the environment in which they lived on all points upon which Scripture or conscience did not speak explicitly.

EVOLUTION IN FORMS.

them and the circuits ; but these tendencies were only dawning. It is obvious that events were rapidly leading to a breach between the two sections of the Church, and this independent of the great issue of slavery, which was the occasion rather than the cause of the separation. The real reason, felt rather than understood, was a growing unlikeness of type. The South held for a Church set in close relations to its peculiar civilization, and advancing only so rapidly as she could carry the civilization as well. The North held for a spiritual society in which absolute righteousness was the standard toward which she urged the individual, regardless of his environment.

The South was liberal in its conception of Christian conduct, the North rigid and somewhat puritanical. It was well for the peace of the Church, perhaps, that these subtle but potent influences were hidden beneath more obvious causes. If slavery was the question upon which the Church was broken, it was because the Southern Methodists perceived that the relations

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

which they had assumed to their civilization were too sacred to be abandoned, and the obligation to ministration in formal worship was one not to be evaded. Therefore they could not assent to any act which was tantamount to a condemnation of that civilization. However, the resolutions before the General Conference of 1844, one and all, involved such a judgment. No option was left to the Southern leaders but to withdraw, peaceably and in good will, or else to repudiate the society in which they lived. Their action, under the circumstances then obtaining, was undoubtedly right from their view-point. The mistake, if mistake there was, antedated that historic Conference by a generation, and consisted in not checking the formal development in an earlier stage. Such a check would have been possible indeed, only by the surrender of progress and influence; as the slow growth of those forms of Methodism, which have adhered closely to the primitive ideas abundantly testifies.

On the other hand, it is difficult to see how

EVOLUTION IN FORMS.

the Church in the North could have gone farther in concession than it did. In ultimate fact, two diverse civilizations had been developed, and any intimate ministration to the needs of such conditions involved a separation in the ministering organism. Thus the second great result of formal development was the division of the Church.

The years which followed witnessed the great expansion of the Church; an increase in wealth and position; it was the period of the great revival. Formal influences soon began to act definitely upon the Church in the North, and with definite results.

1. Foremost among these was the development of "stations." This was the logical result of increased membership in given localities. For a long time even city Churches had been combined in the circuit system, two or three ministers being the joint pastors of as many Churches. The real significance of the general movement from the circuit system to the station plan was the desire for stated services upon the

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

Sabbath. Under the circuit system, week-day preaching was almost invariable; the Sabbath services were frequently in charge of laymen, who conducted classes, prayer-meetings, Sabbath-schools, or, as local preachers, formally preached. All this accorded with the genius of primitive Methodism. But under the new influences a more formal worship was introduced, more emphasis was placed upon the elements of worship; and this, in turn, involved the presence of a regular minister. Gradually the economy of the Church was changed to meet these requirements.

2. A second consequence was, that the responsibility for local work was transferred naturally—that is to say, gradually but steadily—from the laity, who had hitherto borne it, and placed upon the preacher in charge. This transition occurred in several ways. The conduct of the formal services came to pertain solely to the preacher, and the number of local preachers rapidly declined with this decreasing importance of their work. This office, which had

EVOLUTION IN FORMS.

once claimed the highest intellectual talent of the laity, became rather an incident than a regular function of the Church; a sort of "pre-conference" training-school for ministerial candidates; or a relic of past services. As a matter of fact, here and there local preachers served with old-time efficiency; but the general tendency to the disuse of the office was marked indeed.

At the same time the subpastorate of the laity suffered great changes. Under the circuit system, the only efficient pastorate was that of the class-leader. But with a regular minister resident in a place the subpastorate gradually declined; and this feature of the class—the thing for which it had been primarily intended—devolved upon the preacher, until it affected the very name of the office, and transformed him from a prophet into a "pastor."

The same influences profoundly affected the business affairs of the Church. These had for a time been very largely in the hands of the laity; for the circuit preacher could not be ex-

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

pected to master local conditions, nor stimulate the individual membership to a proper activity. But whether rightly or not it was presumed that a resident pastor—devoting his whole time to the Church—was in a position to manage its secular affairs. And very gradually he became the business head of the Church; active in all debt-raising or building enterprises, and necessarily active in his own support.

These tendencies resulted also in the development of a formal constituency. The holding of regular services of formal worship, with features of simplicity and fellowship, drew into association with the Church numbers of people who did not profess the spiritual attainments for which Methodism stood. They were attracted by its democratic forms, by its spirited music, and, above all, by its type of preaching, which appealed to the imagination of common men in a degree unrivaled by the written sermons common in other Churches.

The existence of such a constituency added materially to the resources of the Church in a

EVOLUTION IN FORMS.

given community, and enabled the achievement of enterprises impossible to the society itself. More pretentious structures were erected; villages asked for the rank of stations in anticipation of such patronage; until these constituencies held a recognized place in the thought of the Church; the strength of Methodism was measured by its adherents as well as by its membership. Obviously such a relation was one of reciprocity; and, having accepted such assistance, the Church was debarred from action that would mortify or alienate this great body of her friends. The reaction affected her style of preaching—though this tendency only reached its climax at a later period; affected also the stringency of her discipline, until in time considerable portions of these “adherents” were received into her membership.

4. As a matter of course such additions to the membership involved a more lax interpretation of disciplinary requirement and of traditional doctrine. The great realities of spiritual life were unceasingly preached, morality

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

was never compromised, but in lesser ways restrictions were ignored and many important provisions lapsed. It was not to be expected that a constituency developed on the formal principle would sympathize with the drastic spiritual culture of the class-meeting. Hence it occurred that a very respectable and considerable portion of the Church disregarded this fundamental and organic institution. Already the pastoral function of the class had been superseded by the fixed pastorate, and now its cultural function was attacked as well. The issue was soon drawn; either the class-meeting must lose its place as the test of membership, or the Church must lose its recent accessions, and with them its direct influence upon the communal life. It was the same issue that in another form had confronted the Southern Methodists in 1844, and the answer now given was identical with theirs. In 1864 the class-meeting "test" was formally withdrawn by the General Conference. It was a decision to be true to the logical evolution of the full ecclesiastical idea.

EVOLUTION IN FORMS.

After this decision, it was but a matter of time until the influence of the old-time class should wane and pass away. But the gradual passing of the class-meeting involved three things,—the passing as well of the particular type of Methodism which the class-meeting had developed; the still looser observance of minor disciplinary provisions; and the devolving on the pastorate of the cultural functions of the class. It was definitely determined that the ultimate Methodist type should be a Church-man rather than a spiritual primitive.

5. By these changes Methodism gained immensely in influence and power. Her appeal was made to the entire community. Hitherto she had drawn men out of general society and impelled them to seek their individual salvation; this was essentially a separatist idea, saved from its natural consequences in fanaticism or oddity only by the grace of common sense. The new tendencies were in the direction of the regeneration of society, the redemption of environment, as well as of the individual. This tend-

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

ency was only beginning to operate, is even yet far from fullness of power; but even a beginning along these lines was a matter of immense moment. The influence of the Church upon the popular mind constantly increased until Methodism more nearly satisfied the ideal of a people's Church than any other, and was able, as President Lincoln said, to send "more soldiers to the field, more nurses to the hospitals, and more prayers to heaven than any other." In consequence of this hold upon the popular mind, Methodism powerfully modified the methods and customs of sister Churches. Extemporaneous preaching, testimony services, evangelistic customs, gradually extended to other evangelical Churches; for only so could they hope to keep pace with this vigorous youngest child of the common faith. Methodism passed the stage where it was liable to the ridicule or patronizing tolerance of older organizations, and attained a dignity based upon a consciousness of worth.

So, with the years, these tendencies, justified

EVOLUTION IN FORMS.

by their accompaniment of great good, continued to develop and to modify the ideas and customs of the Church. Some of these changes filled many hearts with alarm, and savored of worldliness; but they were all as inevitable as they were unpurposed.

6. The wealth and power of Methodism within recent years have made possible a more pretentious architecture, until the type of structure in which Methodism worships has undergone a complete change. The early meeting-houses and chapels were extreme in their simplicity, and harmonized perfectly with the simplicity of costume affected by the primitive Methodists. But even in John Wesley's day tokens of architectural ambition appeared, and were rebuked by him as tending to make rich men indispensable to the Church. The last twenty years have witnessed the erection of scores of stately edifices that approach mediæval cathedrals in beauty and impressiveness. Two causes have contributed to this,—the first, that the multiplied activities of the Church re-

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

quire greatly-increased accommodations; parlors, schoolrooms, dining-halls, lecture-rooms, are needed in addition to the auditorium. But more than this is the demand for a Church that shall in itself suggest sanctity, and unconsciously lead the mind to worship; something that shall harmonize with, or even give the keynote to, the entire service. This, be it observed, is essentially a ritualistic idea.

Consonant with this thought is the demand for a more imposing form of service. The choir has come to occupy a once-undreamed-of prominence; the chant, the anthem, the higher elements of music are all brought into requisition; antiphonal services, the recitation of creeds and prayers enrich what was at first a very simple and informal service. Nor are such things peculiar to the richer congregations; for there is scarcely a Church in the entire connection whose ambitions and aspirations do not run before its actual attainments in this direction. It is the natural expression of that impulse to worship which lies deep in human nature. It proves

EVOLUTION IN FORMS.

only that Methodism has become a recognized factor in modern civilization, and therefore feels the same impulses, and responds to the same desires as surge through a great civilization, as it recedes daily from its once general contact with nature. Such movements throughout the Church are a sure proof that it is in touch with an advancing people, and demonstrate the vitality of an organism which responds to its environment with such marked facility.

These influences have modified also the type of sermon. What was once pre-eminently a revival exhortation has come to have another significance. The idea of the Sunday morning sermon is of worship; it must lead the thought of the people Godward, emphasize the beauty of holiness and the life of love; it must do this in a manner at once artistic and dignified; must avoid false notes as does the chorister. Nor does this in any sense lower the ideal of the sermon. It calls for different form and expression, it requires that art shall be sanctified to this high use, it asks temperance and wisdom, but unless

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

it rings true, unless it inspires aspiration, unless it induces holiness it fails as utterly of its purpose as did the old time oratory when it caused no tears of repentance to flow.

7. By this development of formal worship in the Church has resulted also a discrimination of services. In some of these the response made to this impulse has been more ample than in others; hence the people in whom this impulse is strongest tend more and more to be present at such services, and at these only. In other meetings old-time principles prevail, and there gather on these occasions a congregation of another type. This helps us to understand, if it does not fully explain, the growing tendency on the part of many persons to attend only the Sunday morning service, while on the part of others this service is eschewed. The motive or piety of neither can be impugned, nor class distinctions drawn. The present tendencies are in part the natural result of something that lies very deep in the souls of men; both are the natural expression of a profound

EVOLUTION IN FORMS.

religious life, mixed indeed with baser elements. The organic development of Methodism during the last fifty years has been thus dominated by the principle of worship; this force, which was ignored during the early history of the Church, has at length asserted itself until the pendulum—after the manner of human experience—has swung the other way, and the formal influence predominates. This involves, as its consequence, a new type of Methodism—one that will approximate very closely the actual ideals of its founders, though different from that of their immediate followers. There is in this no cause for alarm, but need only for alertness and the grace of common sense.

III.

SOCIAL SURVIVALS.

Formal development seems to have its counterpart in the decadence of the social functions of Methodism. Vanished or vanishing is the old-time circuit, and with this the local preacher as a great force; gone also the class, with its

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

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GENIUS OF METHODISM.

leaders and peculiar system of spiritual culture. No longer is the voice of exhortation heard on every occasion of general assembly. The stewards, once gathered in weekly council over questions of benevolence and practical help, have become a dignified body of advisers, which meets on occasion only. Has the social spirit fled? What means this transformation of primitive institutions? Of all this former glory, there remains only the relic of the aforesaid "General Society Meeting" in the "Midweek Prayer Service" of the present. The connection between the two is clear; but the degree of honor attached to each is significant. The General Society Meeting meant the rally of every member with an enthusiasm which sometimes passed restraint; but this fervor was generally utilized for practical ends, and projects of benevolence were inaugurated or provision made for their continuance. The prayer service of to-day enlists the sympathy of a bare one-fifth of the membership, and has an average attendance of not to exceed ten per cent; a Church of two hun-

EVOLUTION IN FORMS.

dred members congratulates itself upon an attendance of thirty or forty at its midweek service. It is possible, of course, by emphasis and concentration of energy upon this point, to secure better results in a given case; and notable exceptions occur here and there; but for every such exception equally marked failures may be found. Yet, for all this, the spectacle of six hundred thousand American Methodists of all branches gathered around her altars every week, at this regular service, is great enough to inspire doubting hearts with faith and courage. The prayer service continues to be a source of power, but not proportionately as great as once it was. Its enthusiasm, its awful sense of the power of prayer that sometimes bowed the heavens, its hold upon the entire membership of the Church, once so characteristic,—all this has largely passed away; it is no longer a spontaneous expression of the social life of Methodism.

Are we to conclude, then, that the onward sweep of formal development has been at such

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

a cost of the social interests of the Church? or is there reason to suppose that social spirituality has found other means of expression? To answer so pregnant a question, we must examine certain latter-day features of the Church life.

The most marked development of the last decade is along the line of subsidiary organizations within the circle of the Church. Such are—

The Epworth League;
Ladies' Aid Societies;
Missionary Organizations;
Fraternal Associations.

It is at once evident that this is a new chapter in the history of organized Methodism; and it is equally clear that this development does not spring from ritualistic principles, nor is it in any way directly related thereto. The logic of the situation argues the marked revival of the social principle, which meets new conditions by new forms of expression, and indicates that in the normal evolution of the Church the pre-

EVOLUTION IN FORMS.

ponderance of worship is beginning to yield to the social force, and that, in fact, all that was once attained by the class-meeting, the general societies, and the stewardship is to be regained and enlarged by these more recent forms of activity.

Each of these new movements accentuates fellowship, practicality, and benevolence. In some, indeed, direct spiritual culture is less in evidence; but in this group the constituent members are in little danger of a spiritual relapse.

1. The organization of the young people into a definite society was a great achievement. It brought into active operation a force that thitherto had been held in abeyance, in a sort of spectatorship, while the active management of affairs was in the hands of the elders. By this stroke of genius a fraternal pastorate was established, that admirably assumed the discarded pastoral functions of the class. It involved also a practical schooling in the conduct of spiritual matters, and, under wise leadership, has become an aggressive evangelistic force.

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

But the most marked result has been the impetus to beneficence, to deeds of mercy and kindness; this great characteristic of the first Methodists finds a new manifestation in the rising generation.

2. The Ladies' Aid Societies have become a feature of nearly every pastoral charge. Such a society stands, in the first place, for fellowship; and in the second place, for the utilization in practical ways of neglected forces. Upon these societies has devolved a practical guardianship of places of worship; also in places not a few have they assumed a measure of pastoral work, particularly the welcome of strangers. Still, in process of evolution as to form and detailed plans, these societies are already monumental evidences of the power of the social spirit in modern Methodism.

3. Missionary organizations of all kinds are the responses made by those possessed of a surplus of time, energy, or wealth to the needy classes among their fellow-men. They are first local, and then more general. The former class

EVOLUTION IN FORMS.

comprises associations formed chiefly in great cities for the conduct of mission schools, and through these essaying to meet the material needs of the mission constituency. In this branch of work Methodism has often been a pioneer, and the miracle of Kingswood has repeated itself in numerous cases; so that upon mission foundations have been builded some of the most successful of Churches. The great increase of the foreign element in certain communities has caused the problem of local missions often to assume vast proportions, and to call for the best energies of the business men of Methodism as well as the ripest culture of her homes; these have been forthcoming in answer to the need. More recently the movement has reached the stage of federation, and an incipient connec-tional organization has essayed the union of all too scattered and sometimes a too spasmodic effort.

The more general form of the missionary idea has reached its highest expression in the several woman's societies, having their foundation in

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

the dual ideas of the spread of intelligence and in the garnering of petty surplus wherever it can be had, until the net results amount to nearly a million dollars annually. By this mode the missionary societies become agencies for spiritual culture as well as for beneficence, thus conjoining two of the strongest social instincts.

4. Distinctive fraternal associations are the latest response of Methodism to the social spirit. In this respect the Church has lagged behind the age. The spontaneous expression of the general social spirit of the time has been in a marked degree through the medium of benevolent associations; some of which have been of so genial a character, and founded upon such high moral principles, that they have come, in the minds of some, to minister to the cruder spiritual instincts, and thus in a measure to take the place of the Church itself. The very success of these fraternal organizations has been a chief reason why the Church has abandoned a field once wholly its own; for there has seemed little reason for duplicating a work that was

EVOLUTION IN FORMS.

being well done. But it is obvious that, if the Church is to be commensurate with human nature in its approved forms, it can not be diverted permanently from such ministrations as have in the past proved a chief claim to the favor of mankind; and having taught the lesson of fraternity to a world once filled with antagonism and strife, it can not itself cease to practice these ideas. Accordingly it is no mere temporary activity which is already dawning in the simultaneous formation of several fraternal organizations within the Church; but one of the surest prophecies of the future.

5. Significant also of the strength of the social spirit are the numerous hospitals and orphanages maintained by the Church. The army of women, guised in simplicity, and consecrating their lives to definite ministration among the sick or the poor, tells the same story. It is reiterated in the very edifices erected in recent years for the use of the several Churches; for if the cathedralesque proportions of such buildings are a tribute to the spirit of worship, not

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

less distinctly are kitchens, parlors, clubrooms, and gymnasia a testimony to the vigor of the genuine social instinct.

In point of fact, among the various manifestations of the social principle there are lacking but two important things,—a distinctive social culture of spiritual truth, and some recurrent service by which the whole body of the membership, as such, shall come into adequate contact and association, to the end that a more definite Church consciousness shall be developed. The affections seem prone to weave themselves about the subsidiary organizations; a tendency which, if unchecked, may involve the weakening of the parent stock through an unconscious parasitism.

CHAPTER V.

EVOLUTION IN GOVERNMENT.

I. THE CENTRAL AUTHORITY.

II. GEOGRAPHICAL MODIFICATION.

III. DEMOCRATIC INFLUENCES.

I.

THE CENTRAL AUTHORITY.

In a little more than a century the center of government in Methodism has shifted from the personal authority of Mr. Wesley to what approximates a constitutional democracy, pure and simple. Historians of the Church have been engrossed with the activities of the organism; what it accomplished; essentially administrative details. This, doubtless, is a legitimate function; but it is obvious that the history of organic development is another and different matter.

The personal authority of Mr. Wesley was clearly recognized in all the affairs of early Methodism. Theoretically it held true of the societies in America as well as in the several parts of Great Britain. But conditions which made the theory a fact in the last-named country were wanting in America; in the one place it

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

was possible for Mr. Wesley to enforce his judgment by his personal presence or by immediate correspondence, and to adjust matters as they arose. In America, however, the mere elements of time and space rendered impractical such personal administration, and it was of necessity a delegated power by which he ruled the societies. Upon important matters his advice was indeed secured, and his judgment followed; but the necessities of the case increasingly required independent action at the hands of the superintendent and the preachers. Thus while the theory of personal government was loyally maintained, the actuality of independence constantly developed.

The political conditions in America also contributed to this result. The Methodist preachers put loyalty to their spiritual cause before patriotism to the colonies, and incurred by this action hostility and danger; but men of such open sympathies and ardent feelings could not avoid the influence of their democratic environment, even had they wished to do so. Uncon-

EVOLUTION IN GOVERNMENT.

sciously, with the repudiation of the personal government of George III, there grew up a spirit of ecclesiastical independence. This was furthered by the political attitude of Mr. Wesley during the crisis. The elements of alienation were thus at hand, requiring only the pressure of events to produce the fact. It is conceivable that, had the personal government of Mr. Wesley proven meddlesome or oppressive, a spontaneous movement toward independence would have occurred; but the great leader was wonderfully wise in his practical adjustments, and the first step in the direction of an American Church came from himself.

Mr. Wesley seems to have held the idea that personal government was far the best for a Church, at least in its missionary stage. His genius was essentially militant; he thought in campaigns, and conceived concert of action as indispensable to success. In drawing up a plan of organization for American Methodism, he designed that his own authority should devolve intact upon certain superintendents to be named

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

by himself. For this function he designated Dr. Coke and Mr. Asbury, and solemnly inducted the former into the office; and presumably by this latter act, in his own thought, did he formally and sufficiently constitute a superintendent of American Methodism.

Possessed of such authority, Dr. Coke proceeded at once to America, and, on his arrival in New York, he at once unfolded Mr. Wesley's plan to the preacher then stationed in that city. The advice of this Mr. Dickins—who was the first Publishing Agent, and perhaps instinctively attributed a peculiar virtue to printed matter—was that the plan be at once published; officially promulgated, as it were. Had this been done, and had the preachers acquiesced therein, the form of personal government would have been continued; and the subsequent history of Methodism would have been other and different, greater or less, than the years have actually disclosed. It was an unperceived crisis, upon which hinged great consequences. Dr. Coke, however, decided to defer publication until after

EVOLUTION IN GOVERNMENT.

he had conferred with Mr. Asbury. When the interview occurred, the latter declared, with some emphasis, that he would not accept Mr. Wesley's appointment unless it should be confirmed by the body of preachers. It is surmisable that the politician in Mr. Asbury influenced him to this declaration. Prior to this time he had on occasion emphasized his appointment by Mr. Wesley; but now that it was to be solemnly confirmed, he required the consent of his fellow-preachers. The fact seems to be that Mr. Asbury felt himself called to his position of peculiar power, and was determined to hold it; he loved alike its hardships and power. He deemed it unwise to place himself at the will of an old man, not always too favorable in his judgment of this young and daring superintendent. By securing his election at the hands of the preachers, this danger was forever passed. Be that as it may—however mixed the motives, in any case honorable to the man—Mr. Asbury's stand resulted in the calling of the celebrated Christmas Conference in Baltimore in 1784.

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

It suffices here to note that all matters discussed by this Conference were settled by a majority vote of the preachers present; and thus, for the first time in the history of Methodist Conferences, its advisory function was superseded by actual authority. Very quietly, almost by assumption, was this revolution wrought, and personal government gave way to a government by a General Conference of all the preachers.

II.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL MODIFICATIONS.

The history of the formation of the Church polity reveals the original organism, subjected to and modified by two distinct influences,—the one geographical, and the other democratic. The influence of the geographical element was first felt. This was because its conditions were imperative and constant, while the democratic spirit found easy vent for itself in the stress of expansion and in the development of local forms. Thus the organic modifications relate to two periods,—the dominance of the geograph-

EVOLUTION IN GOVERNMENT.

ical influence, and, later, modification under the democratic idea.

The Christmas Conference determined the great issue, as between personal and Conference government, in favor of the latter. But a Governing Conference was a new thing in Methodism, and it remained for events to determine the nature and character of such an anomaly.

The year 1785 saw three Conferences held in the different portions of the country. These several assemblies were necessitated by the great distances to be traversed by the preachers. Even the emergency of the preceding year had only rallied between seventy and eighty per cent of the preachers to the central point of Baltimore. It was obviously impracticable for any great number to attend such a Conference every year. The natural recourse was in the division of the preachers and the holding of separate assemblages. This was done; but, no distinct division into districts being made, it happened that some preachers attended two or more sessions, and thus to them accrued double privileges, as it

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

were. This, however, was the least of the difficulties. Had the Conferences been gathered solely for administration and advice no ill consequences would have occurred. But it was found that new legislation was desirable; and this could be secured only by the concurrent action of three bodies of diverse membership, meeting at different times and places, and with no opportunity for the exchange of opinions or for amendment of the original draft of the proposed legislation. That friction and disagreement should result was inevitable; and this grew greater with the years. Particular legislation desired by one Conference, and being refused by the others, led to acts of insubordination and to threats of secession, eventuating, in individual cases, in withdrawal. Organic unity was sorely tested; the magic of Wesley's name was less potent, since the formation of a separate Church; Asbury's influence was great, but suffered under this tension. Only the essential uniformity of experience and doctrine preserved the Connection from disintegrating.

EVOLUTION IN GOVERNMENT.

At this juncture there was devised a "Council," to be composed of the bishops and the presiding elders, to which all matters requiring concurrent action should be referred. This was a reversion to the Wesleyan government, with Asbury in the place of Wesley; for, the presiding elders being appointed by the bishop, the whole matter resolved itself into a personal government. So great was the tension, and so weak the cohesive forces, that the plan was sanctioned and tried in 1787. Almost instantly the real nature of the plan was perceived, and an outcry arose against it that nullified its power for good, and led to its enforced abandonment.

Upon the arrival of Dr. Coke in 1791 his shrewd mind suggested the calling of a General Conference of all the preachers in 1792, to consider the situation, and to devise means for strengthening the Connection. It was a timely thought, and met with instant favor. Methodism in America had grown wonderfully during the eight years of its separate existence; but a sense of the crisis drew her preachers from

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

the pioneer wilderness of the West, from the shores of New England, and the mountains of Carolina. It was felt that, perhaps, never again would they all be thus assembled.

The General Conference reviewed the situation, took proper action with reference to many important matters, but, most important of all, adjourned to meet four years later. By this simple action was created the "General Conference," as distinct from the several annual assemblies. Geography had forced this development, and forced also the separation of the legislative and administrative functions of the Church. These were great things, especially as they assured the unity and perpetuity of the organism. The work sprung forward as by a new impulse; hope took the place of discouragement, and unity banished dissension.

It was precisely this enthusiasm, and consequent expansion, that induced the next great change in the polity of the Church. A quadrennial General Conference met the conditions which existed in 1792 and the years immedi-

EVOLUTION IN GOVERNMENT.

ately subsequent; yet the growth of the work in the constantly-expanding Nation soon gave rise to serious problems. Even once in four years it was a serious thing that work, sometimes in a delicate or formative period, should be abandoned for from four to six months; and even the glamour and real benefit of a General Conference did not induce the devoted missionaries of that time to make such a concession. Consequently the real power in the governing body came to reside in the centrally-located Conferences of the East. This tendency was already marked by the century year, and bade fair to increase with each ensuing quadrennium. Again was Methodism face to face with a possible oligarchy, or an impending secession; and this by the very institution which had once seemed so complete a remedy for this very evil.

When the Fifth General Conference assembled in 1808 it was obvious that some modification of the plan must be devised. That assembly was actually under the control of but two out of the seven existing Conferences, and these

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

naturally were loath to part with their power. Presently events precipitated a crisis. The Western delegates, despairing of an adjustment, prepared to return home; the worst prognostications seemed about to be realized. At this juncture the members of the dominant Conferences awoke to the gravity of the situation, and at last acceded to the demand for a delegated General Conference. Thenceforward it was solely a matter of conditions; yet within this field there was required a statesmanship as broad and true as ever builded an enduring institution. Theoretically and practically the governing power resided in the general body of preachers. Thereafter they would never again assemble in that capacity. The serious questions were how much of their absolute power could safely be delegated, and how could the reserved rights be exercised. After public and private consultation, and much debate and the acute exercise of all parliamentary tactics, six resolutions were adopted as the sole restrictions upon the delegated General Conference

EVOLUTION IN GOVERNMENT.

These Restrictive Rules were in substance as follows:

1. The preservation of the Articles of Religion as the standard of faith.

2. Concerning the ratio of Conference representation, which obviously was a matter for the Conferences themselves to settle.

3. A rule carefully preserving the Episcopacy and the itinerant General Superintendency.

4. Conserving the sanctity and authority of the General Rules for the formation of local societies.

5. The preservation of the right of appeal to the proper authorities on the part of both preachers and laymen.

6. A rule guarding against any perversion of Book Concern profits or the proceeds of the Chartered Fund from needy preachers or their beneficiaries.

Thus the power to modify the fundamental faith, polity, or peculiar vested interests was rigidly retained in the hands of the eldership. In consequence, the Annual Conferences ac-

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

quired for themselves a new feature, and resumed a portion of their legislative power. The wisdom of this plan has been attested by the fact that novel and even revolutionary measures have been sanctioned by one or another General Conference, and saved only from their logical consequences by failing to secure the requisite sanction from the annual assemblies.

Thus the experiments of a third of a century resulted in a clearly-defined governing body, adapted to all conditions of growth, whether national or world-wide,—the perfected expression of the genius of Methodism. The plastic, unformed, but homogeneous mass of 1784 had become a definite organism, with a succinct constitution. So admirably was it adapted to the conditions of evangelical growth, that thereafter neither numerical nor geographical expansion could modify it in any important degree.

EVOLUTION IN GOVERNMENT.

III.

DEMOCRATIC INFLUENCES.

For fifty years after the Ecclesiastical Revolution of 1784 the spirit of democracy was concerned chiefly to maintain the advantages accruing from that event, or absorbed in questions of administration. When this half century had elapsed, democracy became engaged in an all-engrossing political struggle, which, while it seriously affected the fortunes of the Church, did not give rise to any constitutional changes. When these political issues had been answered in the arbitrament of war, democracy in the Church commenced a series of demands, which in time fundamentally affected the constitution and transformed the theory of ecclesiastical control, upon which the organism had been based. It is purposed, therefore, briefly to consider the first two periods, and then to proceed with a more complete recital of the events of the third.

In the first period, the spirit of democracy was active in rejecting certain plausible solu-

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

tions of the problems created by the rapid expansion of the Church. The rank and file of the itinerancy were too jealous of their recently-acquired prerogatives to tolerate the formation of "the Council," with its lurking prophecy of an ultimate hierarchy. This opposition caused that project to be abandoned in 1792, without so much as the requiem of a debate. Simultaneous with these questions had arisen a great discussion concerning the developing functions of the presiding eldership. Some there were who saw in this the potency of a subepiscopacy; and logically thought to subject those who exercised the office to the same mode of selection as pertained to the general superintendency. On the other hand, such an election of presiding elders was deemed to infringe upon the prerogatives of the Episcopacy, and to threaten its practical extinction. The essence of this discussion lay in the fact that the office was still in a plastic condition, susceptible of modification in one way or another. There can be little question but that elective presiding elders would

EVOLUTION IN GOVERNMENT.

soon have developed a diocesan episcopacy; on the other hand, there may be some reason to believe that such a result, occurring gradually and normally, might have contributed to the strength of the Church. The controversy, thus developed, was waged energetically, perhaps at times bitterly, for a period of forty years. Sometimes the decision inclined one way, again in the other.

The net result was in favor of the Episcopate; and the democratic spirit seems to have failed of its purposed modification, or, perhaps, rather to have been self-restrained in favor of a centralized government.

One other constitutional result of large importance was attained as an incident to this agitation. By the original Restrictive Rules, the "constitution" could be modified only by the assent of three-fourths of the Conferences; but as this rule placed the balance of power in the hands of a few small Conferences, it was perceived that an even and exact democracy required that this power be lodged with the whole

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

body of the ministry as such. Accordingly, in 1832, a change was secured by which three-fourths of the members present and voting could sanction or originate any constitutional change, subject, of course, to the prescribed conditions.

By this time the minds of good men were increasingly devoted to democratic problems other than ecclesiastical. The great question of slavery confronted the Church. Profoundly a moral issue, it found its first hearing from religious men. To some it seemed intolerable; to others it appeared that, in the hands of spiritual men, the institution admitted of large benefit to the slave. One party would have abolished it, the other would have spiritualized it; both recognized the actual evil. In such a crisis was the Church racked and rent. But we deal here only with the constitutional issues involved. These were two. The superiority of the General Conference over the Episcopacy was settled in 1844 by the practical suspension of Bishop Andrew, but resulted in the withdrawal of the Southern Methodists, and the organization by

EVOLUTION IN GOVERNMENT.

them of an ecclesiastical system, in which the Episcopacy logically held a higher place and was ultimately gifted with larger powers. The second question concerned the vested rights of the eldership of the Church in the Book Concern. This was settled by the Supreme Court of the United States, in the sense that such rights were inalienable, except when forfeited with such eldership itself. These were indeed important matters; but their effect upon the organic development was not marked.

The real period of democratic influence extends from 1868 to the present time; and perhaps is as yet not fully consummated. The Revolution of 1784, while achieved under democratic impulses, did not result in a pure ecclesiastical democracy. By this change, government was lodged in the Conference, as such; that is to say, in the ministry. But the authority of this ministerial body over the rank and file of the Church was precisely that claimed by Mr. Wesley over his preachers. The individual membership had responded to the work of the

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

evangelistic organizers, and had tacitly sanctioned their authority. This assumption of power by the preachers was of necessity rather than ambition. They were the only class to whom opportunities for conference occurred, and thus the only class through which organic unity could be attained or maintained.

When increasing compactness of population, and the increased facilities for transfer, made a broader democracy possible, the preaching body, habituated to power by its exercise through three-quarters of a century, felt a natural reluctance, and even a logical dread, of such an innovation. Certainly there seemed little danger of hierarchical developments, if things continued as they were, while in the unknown lurked radical possibilities. The agitation for a broader democracy first assumed the form of a demand for lay representation in the General Conference. Suggestions to this effect had been made as far back as 1824. A General Conference Committee, in 1852, gave it especial attention, but reported that it was inexpedient. This

EVOLUTION IN GOVERNMENT.

settled the matter for a time, and in the all-absorbing issue of the national crisis it was farther obscured. But in 1866, through various organs of expression, the demand was reiterated, and with surprising unanimity. The laity seemed to have suddenly awakened to an ecclesiastical consciousness that demanded recognition. Strong delegations presented the matter to the General Conference of 1868. The debate in committee and on the public floor centered around three points:

1. Did the people desire it?
2. Had the General Conference authority to make the change?
3. What should be the basis of lay representation, if the principle were accepted?

The Conference relegated the first issue to a popular vote by the mature membership of the Church. This in itself was a recognition of the basal principle of democracy, and contained the germ of unsuspected modifications.

Concerning the second point, the Conference decided that a grave constitutional change was

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

involved, and that the sanction of the ministry was required. A twofold process was required. The Restrictive Rule must first be modified to permit the change; then, this having been done, the modification itself must in turn be accepted. This deferred the final decision till the actual assembly of the General Conference in 1872.

With regard to the third point, a plan was drafted for two lay delegates from each Conference, except such as had but one ministerial representative; and also for the creation of a Lay Electoral Conference for the selection of these delegates. This action, when finally sanctioned, created the first distinctive Lay Assembly known to the Church; whose evolution is an important element in the growth of the government. By the terms of this plan, democracy was far from being equalized, but it marked such a real advance, and was conceived in so liberal a spirit as to win acceptance in the same fraternal temper.

These difficult and intricate processes, bordering in some respect upon the unconstitutional,

EVOLUTION IN GOVERNMENT.

were finally carried out. The first action of the General Conference of 1872 was to sanction the preceding steps, and to admit the provisional lay delegates; thus consummating the first chapter of ecclesiastical democracy.

The next phase of the evolution was twofold and simultaneous. The presence of lay delegates required the determination of the meaning of the term; and while a struggle arbitrarily to fix the sense of the term in one way or another was on, a demand was also made for equal numerical representation, which had been refused by the original plan. The expression, "lay members," as applied to class-leaders, stewards, and other officers of the local Church, had long been regarded as inclusive of women. The granting of the right to vote to both sexes, as was done in the original determination of the issue, held the same significance. Women also sat in the Quarterly Conferences, and to a degree in the Electoral Conferences; and hence were represented by the delegates chosen. Ideal justice clearly indicated their right to seats in

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

the General Conference, when properly credentialed. But the ideal failed of realization, partly from practical considerations, and partly from the Scriptural opinions of a small minority; so that, for thirty years, the democratic ideal as applied to women was held in abeyance. Its realization after a long struggle, was the result of a complex of conditions, presently to be recited.

The agitation for equal lay representation encountered other difficulties. It was held that a provision, requiring a concurrent vote of both orders under certain easy conditions, gave practical equality in all matters save election of officers, including the bishops; and this, it was affirmed, affected the ministry so intimately as to justify a preponderance of ministerial influence. Such equalization threatened also to render the assembly too cumbrous for effective work, unless the ratio of clerical representation was further reduced; and this suggestion found no favor. Several constitutional amendments were suggested, but were defeated either by the

EVOLUTION IN GOVERNMENT.

General Conference, or by failing to secure the requisite three-fourths vote from the ministry. At length, in 1897, a proposition, emanating from the Rock River Conference, was sanctioned by the Annual Conferences; and on the strength of this victory lay delegates were chosen by the respective Electoral Conferences in numbers corresponding to the clerical representation. These were admitted by the General Conference of 1900, immediately after it had recorded its constitutional vote upon the question.

This General Conference, famous for this achievement, has a still stronger right to fame in another direction. Though much had been accomplished for representative government, it yet remained true that fundamental democracy was unachieved. The later forms of government had been derived through the Conferences, and these had retained their reserved rights unimpaired. So long as the laity did not share in these, somewhat was lacking to their full equality; and this somewhat held implications that their new powers were of privilege rather than

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

of right. It is significant of human shortsightedness that the change which put an end to this anomalous condition came as an incident rather than a definitely-purposed reform.

The fundamental law of the Church had been for a full century a matter of conjecture and debate. In 1884 steps were taken for a Commission on the "Constitution," looking to its codification. The matter lagged and lapsed attaining but a perfunctory attention in the stress of other issues. But a commission appointed in 1896 brought the matter to a focus; and upon the basis of their report the General Conference of 1900 codified for the first time those passages of the Discipline which were held to have the force of fundamental law. But, in addition, they incorporated certain other provisions which seemed logically required to round out the Constitution. Among these supplementary provisions were two of particular importance. One fully recognized the eligibility of women to seats in the General Conference, and thus finally settled this issue, and raised the idea

EVOLUTION IN GOVERNMENT.

of democracy above sex limitations. Another endowed the Electoral Conference with those legislative functions which had hitherto pertained solely to the ministry; and required that a concurrent two-thirds vote of the members present in both the Annual and Electoral Conferences was essential to sanction or inaugurate a constitutional change. It does not appear that this change aroused any discussion either in the General or Annual Conferences when it came to vote; notwithstanding, it was the most radical modification in the theory of government since the passing of personal administration in 1784; for it was thus conceded that the powers of the Church resided in the several classes of members as such; and thus the largest claims of pure democracy were recognized. The Lay Conferences acquired legislative power, and took the first step in a development that is sure to be momentous.

The formal adoption of a codified constitution, as consummated in 1902, marks the end of the period of organic plasticity. Hencefor-

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

ward—following the analogy of other social institutions—evolution must occur in particular rather than in general features.

In these particulars it may be noted that the march of democracy has already begun. The General Conference of 1900, in providing for election of trustees by the congregation, gave the general society a status it had never before possessed, and suggested as well the rapid democratization of local forms, which theretofore had been autocratic and personal. It needs no large measure of the spirit of prophecy to anticipate such a continuation of this development as will, in time, bring the laity into conscious control of the local societies.

CHAPTER VI.
EVOLUTION IN ADMINISTRATION.

- I. THE EPISCOPACY.
- II. SUBSIDIARY ORGANIZATIONS.
- III. INTERMEDIATE ADMINISTRATION.
- IV. THE MINISTRY.
- V. LOCAL FORMS.

I.

THE EPISCOPACY.

In its growth the Episcopacy has already passed through three stages, and seems now verging upon a fourth. During the first forty years of Methodist Church history the number of bishops was at no time greater than three. The ratio of bishops to the ministry and membership was as one to every two hundred preachers and every forty thousand members. The type of organization was simple, and the functions of a bishop made possible, or even necessitated, an immediate contact with the whole Church. As a result, the policy and plans of Wesley were in large part maintained; the bishops were itinerant evangelists, who gave their first powers to preaching and to the formation of new circuits. The few Annual Conferences required but a small portion of their time, and were rather made the occasions for special revival

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

activity. Thus the bishops had abundant opportunity for coming into contact with the people at first hand.

As far as possible the general superintendents discharged in person the function of agents for missions. They raised funds to be disbursed in remote districts, and themselves applied these sums to the needs of the frontier. It was a strenuous life that made them homeless; but in turn a thousand doors opened to their knock, whether at midnight or noonday.

They knew every preacher in the connection; and from this knowledge, doubtless with a meed of bias as well, they arranged the plan of the circuits. And if many of the fields were both hard and poor, it is certain that the bishops said, "Come!" rather than "Go!" They lived upon the picket-line of a militant Church. Strong men they were, rugged in personality, intense in judgment, devout, earnest, masterful! Under these leaders, during forty years, the membership doubled, and doubled, and doubled yet again, and all but accomplished that feat for the

EVOLUTION IN ADMINISTRATION.

fourth time. Nor have the eighty years which have since elapsed equaled that achievement.

The power of these early bishops was in striking contrast to that of the Wesleyan superintendent. The latter had the power, if not the spirit, of an autocrat; he could determine the plans as well as the appointments of the Conference; his was the last word in all matters of judgment. The ballot was an unnecessary formality; for when the sense of the meeting was plain, the superintendent gave it voice. But when the Christmas Conference asserted itself, this great authority was reduced to the function of appointment and to certain judicial powers. But despite this relatively meager equipment the early bishops contrived to dominate the Church. It was done, first by force of personality, and, secondly, by an insight into great problems which came from a direct knowledge of the entire field. To these influences were added a skill in the control of assemblies, which enabled them often to secure favorable action from even hostile Conferences. This was fur-

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

thered by the fact that for twenty-eight years the bishops sat as regular members of the several General Conferences, possessing the right to speak and vote upon the subjects at issue. During the twelve years next following their judicial powers served as a check upon General Conference legislation in a very marked degree. At times they restrained the law-making body from a proposed action, or in cases their influence with Annual Conferences prevented final confirmation.

When all has been said, it is patent that this period was characterized by a dominant Episcopacy.

The second epoch may be termed one of transition. It extends from 1824 to 1872, a period of nearly fifty years. During this time the general superintendency underwent important modification; the type changed from the pioneer to that of the administrative bishop. Certain characteristics of the Church require also to be noted. Notwithstanding the loss of five hundred thousand members by withdrawal, the

EVOLUTION IN ADMINISTRATION.

membership twice doubled. It was a time of marked organic development; the structure of the Church was largely determined during the earlier period, but within these lines there was great growth. The great connectional societies sprang into existence, the family of *Advocates* became an actuality, and the educational impulse blossomed in a score of colleges and universities. The number of Conferences greatly increased, and the form of Church activity was greatly changed; the matter of appointments assumed an unsuspected complexity.

The number of active bishops increased but slowly. In 1824 there were five bishops, and again in 1848; while as late as 1863 the responsibilities of the Church were in the hands of but six men, and this small number, by a succession of catastrophes, was reduced to but four in 1871. In the interval between these dates the numbers were somewhat greater; but they never exceeded nine, and the average for the period was six. Obviously, one of the marked characteristics of the epoch was the rapidly-multiplying ratio be-

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

tween the bishops and both ministry and people. In 1824 the ratio was one superintendent to every two hundred and fifty-four preachers; in 1868, it reached a maximum of one to eleven hundred and sixty-six; while three years later, owing to unexpected mortality in the Board of Bishops, the ratio of those who were counted efficient was temporarily one to twenty-five hundred. As to membership, the change in the ratio was not quite so marked, but still characteristic. Beginning with one to every sixty-five thousand, a maximum was reached in 1860 of one to every one hundred and sixty-five thousand—a figure that was not again approached save during the temporary depletion in 1871.

It is clear that the conditions thus obtaining must have developed new relationships; the itinerant evangelist type could influence this period only by tradition. The field was comparatively well manned; there was less requirement for direct missionary activity on the part of the bishops; a definitely-organized society had assumed a large measure of this responsibility.

EVOLUTION IN ADMINISTRATION.

The relation of the Episcopacy to the general body of the ministry ceased to be intimate; conditions precluded comradeship in revival campaigns. Conference sessions presented new administrative problems, which required increased attention from the bishops. Theretofore appointments had been all of the circuit type, with the period of service limited to one or two years; the most perplexing problems were automatically solved. But with the extension of the time-limit, and the differentiation of the type of appointments, the matter assumed a new importance, and thus withdrew the Episcopacy even more from popular contact.

Educational and general society interests claimed a share of episcopal energy. More and more were the bishops involved in the trammels of organization, and, in proportion, active leadership devolved upon other parties. Thus the period of transition produced at length a new type of Episcopacy, and by 1872 a third stage of development was at hand.

From that year to the present time is the era

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

of the administrative Episcopacy. Activity during this period was along lines foreshadowed during the closing decade of the preceding one. The interests of the great societies had increased wonderfully; and the administration of millions of dollars of trust funds became a matter of first importance. The character of the Annual Conferences has been almost wholly changed, their business being confined largely to purely administrative and technical questions. Missionary enterprises in distant lands have made larger demands; social and business affairs have required attention. Correspondence became almost intolerably burdensome. With the architectural revival church dedications became a large element in the situation; these, indeed, afforded opportunity for popular contact, but under abnormal conditions. Multiplying conventions offered a larger scope for personal influence; but even here the rush and bustle of the occasions robbed them of their highest value. Under such circumstances routine has threatened to obscure personality; the

EVOLUTION IN ADMINISTRATION.

bishops have become overworked servants of the Church rather than militant chieftains. No set of men could long bear such taskings, and retain that buoyancy of enthusiasm necessary to most successful personal leadership.

In consequence of engrossing administrative functions, it became the rule to select the bishops from those who held administrative positions. Of the twenty-eight men selected for the office in thirty years—a number greater than that of those elected during the preceding ninety years—but three were called directly from the pastorate.

Such general conditions induced an almost unconscious search for a remedy; and in this way began a steady trend toward a diocesan Episcopate. In 1872 the General Conference directed the bishops to reside in certain centers, from which it was thought they could exert a moral and personal influence upon the surrounding country. In 1884 the Conference elected William Taylor to the missionary bishopric of Africa; in 1888 J. M. Thoburn was elected to

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

the missionary bishopric of India and Malasia; and in 1896 the Conference continued the African bishopric by the election of Joseph Hartzell in place of Bishop Taylor. In the same year the Board of Bishops was requested to designate one of their number to travel and reside in China and Japan for two consecutive years, and to hold the Conferences twice. In 1898-9 one of the bishops was assigned twice in succession to a group of Conferences adjoining his episcopal residence, with the avowed object of consummating certain administrative plans. In 1900 the General Conference for the first time exercised a direct appointive power and assigned the several bishops to particular places, and directed them to maintain an actual residence. At the same time Bishop Vincent was appointed to the bishopric, or diocese, of the jurisdiction of Europe for a period of five years, and Bishop Moore for a like time of Eastern Asia; while Drs. Parker and Ware were chosen joint superintendents with Bishop

EVOLUTION IN ADMINISTRATION.

Thoburn to the jurisdiction of India and Malaysia.

This constitutes a remarkable series of events. Two things stand forth prominently,—the assertion by the General Conference of its authority over the bishops; and the steady approach toward the general idea of episcopal districts. Among themselves, from year to year, the bishops already determine such districts, and within these limits each exercises his authority. It remains only for the General Conference in its judicial capacity to rule that the fixing of episcopal jurisdiction for a quadrennium is not in subversion of the sense of the Restrictive Rule. Practically, indeed, this question has already been adjudicated by the assignment of regular bishops to such limited jurisdiction in Asia and Europe; nor does the mere matter that these jurisdictions are missionary fields alter the revolutionary character of the assignment.

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

II.

SUBSIDIARY ORGANIZATIONS.

Militant Methodism subsisted upon the country it undertook to evangelize. Conditions favored this mode, and gave it decided advantages many a door which opened to welcome the way worn itinerant received with him the gospel. The region which permitted such tactics occupied the attention of American Methodism for half a century. Some minds, however, perceived that the claims of peoples too unresponsive or too poor to maintain such campaign were not less urgent. At the same time, as to meet this responsibility, the more established Churches became conscious of a surplus of energy. Across the seas Carey had inaugurated the era of modern missions; Coke, whose peculiar relation to American Methodism made his example more impressive, had flamed up and down the Island Empire in his advocacy of the holy cause, and at length himself had undertaken the task of establishing a mission in Cey

EVOLUTION IN ADMINISTRATION.

lon; Judson and others had responded to the new idea in behalf of the American Churches. At this juncture a few gentlemen, meeting in New York, by their personal initiative organized a "Missionary Society" within the Methodist Church. It was a characteristic response to a perceived need. The attention of the society was first directed to domestic missions, and especially to work among the Indians. These operations, however, were comparatively limited. In 1820 the Society received the sanction of the General Conference; a little later the man chiefly instrumental in its organization, Dr. Nathan Bangs, was elected secretary, and gave his entire energy to the task. Foreign missions were opened in South America in 1837, in China in 1847, and in India ten years later. Since then operations have been extended to other countries and continents. In 1852, Dr. Durbin was called to the management of its affairs, and by his masterly genius the income was increased seven-fold during the ensuing thirty years; and since then it has again doubled.

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

By the year 1864 the problem of church-building, especially in the rapidly-developing West reached an acute stage. The Upper Iowa Conference devised a system of Church Extension which appealed to the Church at large as meeting the requirements of the situation. The General Conference of that year, upon this plan as a basis, organized the Board of Church Extension, which, by donations and loans, sought to stimulate church-building enterprises. It has met with marvelous success.

The close of the Civil War created a new problem. The slaves were freed, and at once separated from the Methodist Church, South partly by the suggestion of that body, and partly by their own volition. Large numbers came under the jurisdiction of the Northern Church. The situation called for immediate and adequate response. Again personal initiative met the situation; the "Freedmen's Aid and Southern Education Society" was organized in Cincinnati in 1866, and was sanctioned and adopted by the General Conference two years later.

EVOLUTION IN ADMINISTRATION.

The Centennial of American Methodism in 1866 resulted in the creation of a general education fund; the problem of its administration was answered by the organization of the "Board of Education."

The next year the unsuspected opportunities for woman's work in foreign mission fields were revealed, and a few ladies undertook the support of Miss Thoburn in India. The effect was electrical; the unguessed missionary zeal in the womanhood of the Church had found its opportunity; they rallied to the new movement. Equally effective was the new force on the mission fields themselves. In a few years the Society developed its main lines of work, and administered funds aggregating hundreds of thousands of dollars annually.

In 1872 the new impulses that were felt in Sunday-school work resulted in the voluntary association of a few individuals in a "Sunday-school Union." The General Conference of 1876 recognized the Society, and elected Dr. Vincent as its secretary.

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

The most striking thing in connection with this record is the fecundity of the Church in the matter of great societies during the eight years from 1864 to 1872; within this period five organizations were formed, and secured the indorsement of the highest authority of the Church, as well as abundant support from the generality of the laity.

This résumé, brief as it is, makes evident three important things:

1. The first relates to their origin, which has been repeatedly emphasized as providential. When stripped of a phrase which means much or little according to the mind that uses it, this idea is seen to mean that a perceived opportunity or obligation has been met by the first adequate means. The hamperings of traditions or form have never been allowed to hinder the benevolence of the Church. Precisely this practical sensitiveness has been her glory from the day of her origin to the present time.

2. The connectional societies are in consequence accidental as to form. They originated

EVOLUTION IN ADMINISTRATION.

from personal initiative, and assumed whatever form seemed to their founders to be best adapted to the purposes in hand. From this arises a lack of logical division,—a neglect of some objects worthy of benevolence and a measure of duplication. From this results also the more serious disadvantage, that the relation between individual Methodists and the several societies is purely voluntary,—something over and above their obligation to the Church. The appeal for support is based upon impulse rather than upon loyalty or conviction; and hence requires to be constantly stimulated, instead of being self-propagating.

3. In a general way the societies resemble each other as to form and methods, presenting organizations within a greater organism. Each is manned by its own staff; and their policies have sometimes eventuated in open rivalry. At first these officers were regarded as being administrative only; but gradually to this supervision of disbursements has been added a responsibility for collection. This feature grew more

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

marked each year for a decade, and culminated, in 1901, in the commissioning by the two largest of the societies of avowed field agents.

It is obvious to the student of history that these organizations are an anomaly in the economy of Methodism; and the constant effort of the Church has been to assimilate them. Local Churches have manifested this tendency in grouping the requested contributions together, and either including them in the regular budget of the Church or presenting them as a natural part of her activity, for which there should be no special pleading. A general phenomenon such as this indicates the spontaneous effort of a living organism to assimilate extraneous forms. The societies themselves have felt this attitude of the general Church, and have responded to it by a partial abandonment of the old appeal to public sympathy, and in its place have levied what is practically an assessment upon local Churches; but being an assessment without express authority it has been necessary to develop a means for its enforcement. To this

EVOLUTION IN ADMINISTRATION.

end a financial standard has been established, by which both local organizations and preachers in charge have been increasingly judged. Here, again, is a result ordained by the higher law of organic assimilation.

A third effort in this direction has been made by the General Conference itself. There has been in its legislation a steady tendency to fuse the management of the several societies into one, chiefly by naming the same representatives from the General Conference Districts to sit on the three great committees, while the long growing feeling culminated in 1900 in the authorization of a commission to consider the entire problem of consolidation.

A further subordinate organization requires a brief consideration. Upon its formal organization, American Methodism found itself possessed of a small publishing business, and immediately took steps to place it upon a secure foundation and to safeguard its profits in the interest of needy or superannuated preachers. The growth and development of the Book Con-

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

cern is one of the greatest chapters in the history of the Church. Being a business enterprise it has been less intimately related to the organic development of Methodism, but its contributions to the spiritual and social life of her people are beyond estimate.

Its history presents three epochs. First as an instrument of propaganda, — publishing tractates, controversial treatises, and whatever else that could contribute to the expansion of the Church or to an intelligent and loyal piety on the part of her people. From 1820 to 1860 it passed through a second epoch, characterized by the creation of a great periodical literature. In 1870 it entered upon a profit-sharing period. The Church in the interest of her wornout and veteran ministry seemed to rely upon her business enterprise for their support. For a time this urgency threatened to destroy the usefulness of the Concern as an agency for propaganda. Latterly this danger has lessened, and the great publishing interests seem entering upon a fourth epoch in their history, which shall

EVOLUTION IN ADMINISTRATION.

witness the creation of a Christian literature commensurate with the needs of the times and the power of the Church.

III.

INTERMEDIATE ADMINISTRATION.

No office in the Church has fluctuated more in its relative importance than the presiding eldership. It has ranged from almost episcopal functions to a disregarded limbo for unadaptable talent, and then with an astonishing resiliency has regained a measure of its importance. These fluctuations have been due to its intermediate position; at one time the growing functions of the Episcopacy have encroached upon it, and at another it has diminished before the growing tendency on the part of Churches to dispense with its services. Strong men have made it a synonym for opportunity; weak men have destroyed its reputation locally. As an institution it is yet undeveloped; its ultimate place in the Methodist economy is yet unde-

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

terminated, though there are not lacking signs that it is coming to its own at last.

Perhaps no single factor in Methodism has contributed more to her present position than this characteristic intermediate administration. As has been indicated, the office had its origin in the requirements of formal worship, which is still evidenced by its name and, in part, by certain customs which survive. But no sooner had the office been devised than its great possibilities became apparent. In the very nature of things, to man her growing work, Methodism was required to take untried material into her ministry. Left to themselves, inexperienced men must have committed blunder upon blunder; but under the wise supervision of their elders their fresh enthusiasm became a potent factor for aggressive work. This constituted for the new functionary an inspiring situation; it tested his capacity for leadership; it afforded vent for his largest enterprises, and developed the masterful qualities of his mind. To his subordinates he was a general in command; to the

EVOLUTION IN ADMINISTRATION.

bishops, an indispensable counselor. Great men filled the position; it assumed the aspects of a subepiscopacy; it seemed for a time that it might become the real source of administration. What alone prevented this consummation was the fact that, being an appointive office, its tenure rested with the bishops. This also raised the question whether those who held the office were representative of their preachers to the general authorities, or did they represent the general Church in a locality? Definitely to settle this issue, it was proposed that the presiding elders be elected by the Conferences. Over this issue controversy was waged for nearly forty years, unsettling the Church and preventing that quiet adjustment of the office to the general economy which is only possible during the plastic periods of organic life. Perhaps indirectly this effort to magnify the position, having failed, was the real cause of its later uncertain history. How nearly the plan came of actual realization has been but little understood; but once the issue was thus decided, it was from that

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

hour certain that the presiding eldership could be assimilated into the general economy only upon the side of a centralized institution.

For the next sixty years the Church seemed groping toward this solution. The traditions of the office, so far as they had been developed by the masterful men who at times had held it, pointed toward administration from a local point of view. Hence a crossing of influences which held the issue suspended. In itself, the office gave no special authority; it was inert before personality. Occasionally some luminous spirit illustrated its possibilities and set a new standard; such a one was forceful alike before the Churches and in the cabinet chamber. Here, at last, it seemed to find an indispensable function. The increasing disparity between the effective bishops and the ministry required to be bridged; machinery had to be devised for the purpose; that which was most readily adaptable to this was the presiding eldership. Here, again, arose the old question of representation; but this found its answer in the growing tend-

EVOLUTION IN ADMINISTRATION.

ency on the part of the stronger Churches to present their cases through committees. So the office developed upon the episcopal rather than the popular side.

At the same time the Quarterly Conference had been losing its once great importance; local matters were adjusted either informally, or when it had been authorized, by the Official Board. This reduced the Quarterly Conference to a routine meeting, save only as related to the presentation of matters from the general authorities. Thus, logically, in this also the presiding elder became the representative of centralization. Among the smaller Churches and on mission fields he still retained much of his former power. But here again the inevitable tendency was in evidence; for his influence under these conditions arose from the fact that he embodied the idea of a great Church back of the struggling and feeble enterprises; and hence was a living promise of better things.

Contemporaneous with these developments has been an expansion of jurisdiction. The

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

average district of the earlier presiding elders was composed of from fifteen to twenty circuits; the necessity for detailed attention to the affairs of each charge precluded a larger field; latterly the average has risen to nearly thrice that number; the functions of eldership have changed largely from the inspirational type to that of administration pure and simple. The ever-increasing number of connectional enterprises, and the necessity of placing them in touch with the local authorities, has furthered this development. Six hundred elders could be brought into active co-operation, when it might be impossible directly to reach the great army of fifteen thousand pastors. Unconsciously the success of an elder was judged by his response to these connectional demands, and the degree in which he brought his district into harmony with the plans of the general Church.

From this point of view the future of the office appears in outline. Long since its aspirations to become the dominant factor in the Church were ended; but equally unsuccessful

EVOLUTION IN ADMINISTRATION.

has been the effort to eliminate it from the organism. It has proven its right to a place in ultimate Methodism. Now the character of that ultimate place is becoming evident. The general Church must become an increasing element in Methodist life; it is imperative that there be a mediator between the general and the local. With the growth of this need has come also the answer in the modified office of the presiding elder.

IV.

THE MINISTRY.

The ministerial office is so closely related to the organism of a Christian Church that it is impossible to describe its general evolution without at the same time recording many of the modifications through which the ministry itself passes. Such has been the case in the present recital. It remains chiefly to gather together these various allusions, and discern their special significance.

The authority of the Methodist ministry was

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

in the beginning derived from the fact of its spiritual power. It was itself the product of the great revival movement, and received therefrom its impetus and its form. It was in its inception essentially a lay ministry, and but gradually assumed ritualistic functions. However, by the development of a great following it came to sustain a definite pastoral and liturgical relation to the several congregations, which presently found expression in the forms which centuries of use had sanctified in Christendom.

The action of the Christmas Conference in ordaining a number of elders and deacons must be regarded as the real beginning of a distinctive Methodist ministry. In England this step was not taken for some years after the death of Mr. Wesley; so that the American Church may well claim a priority as an independent and fully-developed organism. In the consideration of the subsequent years the mind finds two definite lines of thought; the one follows the development of the ministry as an order, and as organized in the several Conferences; the second

EVOLUTION IN ADMINISTRATION.

line of consideration deals with the individual. The first Methodist Conferences were, as their name implies, called for the purpose of exchanging ideas, and for the discussion of plans and purposes. This in general remained their character until the American preachers assumed the authority which Mr. Wesley had theretofore exercised. From this time on the executive element strove with the deliberative to mold the general form of the assembly. By this action four distinctive features developed,—the presidency of a bishop, the open recording of certain official notation, the determination of special plans, and the official announcement of the fields of pastoral labor. More than a century has since elapsed, but these elements have maintained their place to the gradual exclusion of the earlier characteristics. It is interesting to note the general process of this elimination. In 1792, by the calling of a General Conference, the several annual assemblies parted with a large measure of their legislative power. The membership of the General Conference was, indeed,

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

almost coextensive with the ministry; but the separate exercise of these functions began the change in the Annual Conferences. This tendency was accentuated by the formation of a delegated General Conference in 1808, and thereafter the legislative functions of the Annual Conferences consisted in the exercise of reserved powers only. For a quarter of a century, owing to the important nature of the problems to be solved, legislation remained a great feature of the annual assemblies; and it was only gradually that appeals to the Conferences to exercise their reserved powers came to an end as a regular factor in the annual sessions. At intervals, during the ensuing years, important legislation was enacted with the consent of the Conferences; notably, when the ministry admitted the laity to participation in the General Conference, and later on gave them equal privileges therein; more notable even when, by the adoption of a codified constitution, the ministry voluntarily shared its reserved rights with a lay assembly, which was by that document practi-

EVOLUTION IN ADMINISTRATION.

cally re-created. In this history nothing is more conspicuous or more creditable than this continuous dispossession of themselves on the part of the ministry as a body. It stands as a definite rebuke to the idea that in ecclesiastical organism the clerical body tends always to absorb all power; and it must contribute greatly to a permanent comity between the lay and ministerial elements in the Church.

The early Conferences were characterized by definite spiritual culture. In one sense this was their dominant idea. Revival services were almost constant; preaching was frequent, culminating in a great sermon from the presiding bishop. The rules for general conduct during the session emphasized the duty of prayer and spiritual conversation and meditation. There were special considerations which induced this condition. For the most part, this was the sole occasion for special receptivity in a preacher's life. During the rest of the year he was constantly giving; hence he came to Conference with a great personal expectation; he could well

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

afford to give his entire attention, if need were, to spiritual matters. He had a keen realization of the difficulties to be encountered in the ensuing year, and a consciousness of a special need which must be met if he were to be adequate for these responsibilities. The relative unimportance of the official matters before the Conference afforded abundant opportunity for these special spiritual tasks. It is also to be remembered that the preachers of the early day were primarily evangelists, and, as such, prone to express their spiritual impulses in the form of revival services. Gradually these conditions changed. The development of the work placed the preachers in closer relation to each other; it was possible for them to meet on other occasions. Connectional societies developed, official business became more complicated, and all this encroached upon the time formerly given to direct spiritual culture. The type of ministry changed; the evangelist yielded to the minister and the pastor. This created new problems which required consideration, and with as much

EVOLUTION IN ADMINISTRATION.

right. In time the Conferences were entirely transformed. The limitation upon the length of the session, the multiplicity of committees, the attention to certain necessary intellectual questions, the presentation of general Church interests, the demands of an irrepressible and instinctive fellowship, and the anxiety necessarily pressing upon individuals whose future perhaps wavered in the balance,—all coalesced to modify the general character of the sessions. The universal nature of these forces is evidenced by the uniformity with which they have operated, under diverse conditions, producing in all parts of the world the same general effect; so that, of once dominant spiritual services, there alone remain the Conference sermon, the address to the candidates for reception into full connection, the devotional services which precede the business sessions, and, upon Sunday, the solemn and gladsome love-feast, and the eagerly-anticipated sermon from an often exhausted bishop. This is, indeed, ample testimony to the essential spirituality of the assembly.

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

It is obvious that both as cause and effect of these changes was a modification in the type of the individual preacher. This is sufficiently indicated by the titles which were applied to his office. In the beginning he was both evangelist and itinerant. This last title, with its counterpart of "traveling preacher," is reminiscent of the days when circuits were so large as to require weeks to compass them. Under these conditions the preacher was primarily the prophet; a large portion of his time was consumed in direct evangelistic effort; and it is not surprising that the results were commensurate with the effort put forth. Liturgic and geographical conditions resulted at length in the formation of stations, and the introduction of a new type. The preacher survived indeed; but his sermons, being addressed to the same audiences, became wider in their scope. At the same time administrative functions developed and assumed an important place; the preacher became a man of affairs; the waning of the class-meeting increased his pastoral obligations. Thus three

EVOLUTION IN ADMINISTRATION.

tendencies of diverse kind operated upon the ministry, changing a once simple and uniform type into one of great complexity. This much, however, is clear, that any such analysis discloses three distinct classes. The first is dominated by the preaching idea, and attempts to fulfill the complex functions through the medium of the sermon; at its best manifestations this results in genuine greatness, and in a widely-extended influence. The second class deals with administration, and is the result of the great business enterprises frequently undertaken by Churches; at one time or another the pastorate of at least one such minister is indispensable to a Church. The third, and by far the most numerous class, emanates from the pastoral idea; the talents required for success therein, if of a more common order, are far more productive of abiding spiritual results. It is to be observed that these classes are not sharply differentiated in practical life; and that occasionally the coalition of all these elements produces the ideal minister.

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

The most notable modification of ministerial life in recent years has been the gradual lengthening of the period of service. This has resulted from the fact that Church life has tended more and more to center in the preacher or pastor. From the first, the responsibility for success or failure has been thrown upon the preacher in charge. The brief time-limit produced the idea that a new pastor might remedy a bad situation; this was the element in Church life most easily modified, and hence the habitual appeal thereto when things were unprosperous. This reliance upon the preacher in charge was furthered by the custom—which, from another point of view, is the glory of Methodism—of never leaving a preacher without an appointment, or a charge without a pastor. There were but few interims in which the Church was thrown upon its own resources. Naturally, then, much did in fact depend upon the character and ability of the minister; hence he became, when successful, an indispensable bond holding the Church together; and in unfortunate cases the reverse result was

EVOLUTION IN ADMINISTRATION.

in evidence. Hence, in cases where a happy adjustment was secured, arose a reluctance to part with a seemingly indispensable personality. The connectional idea was forgotten, and a species of local selfishness threatened to dominate the appointments. The mobility of the ministry was seriously affected, rendering less practical the execution of great strategic campaigns. These tendencies resulted in the final removal of the time-limit, with its great compensation in the destruction of artificial ambitions. The matter thus remains in a state of fluctuation, destined to evolve new types, whose full significance does not yet appear.

V.

LOCAL FORMS.

Even at the risk of repetition must some recital be made of the various forms through which the local societies have passed. Methodism invariably began in the organization of a class. For this, neither congregation nor chapel was required, but simply a handful of pious

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

souls seeking spiritual enlightenment, and meeting with the most mature of their number for mutual help and prayer. To these classes would come the preacher at stated intervals, the neighbors be called together, and service held in the most commodious place available. The very simplicity of this method enabled Methodism to occupy fields of but little immediate promise, but which in the course of time produced a rich harvest.

The classes under one preacher came to sustain mutual relations, by the election of stewards, and later, as property developed, trustees as well. An interconnection was established also by the work of local preachers in neighboring communities; but the great link between them was the "Quarterly Conference." To this came the official representatives of all the classes,—leaders, stewards, local preachers, exhorters, and trustees; came also the presiding elder, reputed great in the pulpit, wise in counsel. These were great events in the lives of primitive people, and multitudes crowded to the

EVOLUTION IN ADMINISTRATION.

place of meeting, prepared to remain during the several days of the session. Here were enacted scenes to be ever memorable in the history of the Church. Young men heard the call of the Church to the sacred ministry; veteran leaders testified to their growing knowledge of Divine love; wrongs were rectified; tithes were offered to further the great work, and the whole machinery of a great Church was seen in its most intimate and delicate relation.

The formation of the first station was a doom prophecy as regarded the Quarterly Conference and the class. The former, protected by its technical relations, has survived in name, though devoid of real power. The latter soon felt the effects of the new tendencies, and began to wane. In 1864, attendance upon its ministration ceased to be a test of membership, and the fundamental provision of the General Rules became a legal fiction.

The center of local authority passed from the Quarterly Conference to the Official Board, which existed, in fact, long before it was recog-

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

nized in the letter of the Discipline. Some such gathering of a representative body of local Churchmen was urgently required by the development of the station plan. The several functions of the Church found each their appropriate organization; the Sunday-school, the temperance societies, later missionary and social organizations, and the Epworth League, all contributed their multiplied activities to the work of the Church. But these all required co-ordination for their largest usefulness, and this was secured only through the Official Board. At its best this was an efficient organization, working through regularly-organized committees and taking cognizance of everything related to the Church, from its smallest property interests to the best means for the realization of the highest spiritual aspirations. It afforded an adequate medium for the exercise of all their talent on the part of a small number of laymen. Its weak points were in its complete adequacy to the task in hand; so that there was but little occasion for the average member to assume the

EVOLUTION IN ADMINISTRATION.

responsibilities and burdens of the local Church. In addition, the Board was constituted by personal appointment, and hence seemed, in the minds of some, to be oligarchic, at variance with the spirit of the new era, a relic of a once necessary militant system.

At its worst, the Board became a one-man power, dominated by some strong personality, or an irresponsible organization seldom rising beyond advisory functions. Often it failed to relieve the preacher of his onerous duties or to render him adequate support. Between these two extremes was a wide range of useful activity; and the Board proved its right to exist by steadily absorbing new powers and quietly merging itself into the organism of the general Church.

CHAPTER VII.

PROBLEMS OF MEMBERSHIP.

I. ADMINISTRATION OF DISCIPLINE.

II. THE SOCIAL ASSEMBLY.

I.

ADMINISTRATION OF DISCIPLINE.

From the first, Methodism has laid greater stress upon individual culture than upon the communal elements of religion. Historically, this is easily understood; for her founders sought not the establishment of a Church, but the intensifying of individual spirituality. The trend thus given has powerfully affected the usages of their successors.

Certain communal elements have exercised such influences that great Churches have grown up around them. One of the sacraments has received the name "Communion," almost to the exclusion of its proper title. The importance of this rite among Catholics is a matter of easy observation; but it is scarcely less effective, though in a different way, among certain Protestant denominations, among which may be noted the Baptist and the Episcopal. Meth-

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

odism has, indeed, long recognized the importance of this sacrament, and has made abundant provision for its proper observance; but in the wideness of her invitation she has developed a tolerance of neglect upon the part of her own membership, until it has come to be a wholly voluntary matter.

This constitutes in reality another spiritual problem. That Divine grace accompanies the observance of the sacrament is attested by the words of the Master, the experience of the Church for centuries, and the testimony of individuals who have felt its uplifting power. Rightly has the Christian cultus developed around it as a center; there peculiarly is the Master among his people. The solution of this problem is simple, and lies wholly in the power of the ministry. It depends upon an appreciation by them of the magnificent possibilities inherent in the service, and a consequent exaltation of the sacrament to its proper place.

But if the sacrament of the Lord's Supper affords a means for Christian culture, it affords

PROBLEMS OF MEMBERSHIP.

also an opportunity for the elimination of many of the elements which degrade the standard of spiritual life. One of the problems of the Church is undoubtedly to retain its membership, but equally important is it that means be found for eliminating those who have proven themselves persistently unworthy.

In present practice there are but three ways by which this can be done:

1. Occasionally, but very rarely, a member is brought to trial, and expelled through the regular medium of legal action. But the dangers attendant thereon are so obvious and great that violations of the Discipline are tolerated in preference; and it is only resorted to in case of gross sin. For general purposes it is disregarded.

2. Generally, the end is accomplished by an illegal and arbitrary process, which may be called clerical elimination. Preachers in charge, in making out new rosters, may omit certain names; their successors, not finding them upon the roll, do not recognize them as included in the membership. The chances of a demand

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

therefor are remote. So the practice has come into somewhat general usage, and may explain in part the annual loss in membership.

3. The matter is more simple where a member removes from a community without letter; for after a year this is charged against him in the record, and his connection is practically severed. But this method depends for its efficiency upon the migration of members, which is at best uncertain.

Clearly, then, some other and more feasible means would tend to tone up the standard of membership, and give a keener realization of the actualities implied thereby. Such a means is at hand in the provision of the General Rules, that "all who continue in these societies shall continue to evidence their desire for salvation by attending upon all the ordinances of God; such are . . . the Supper of the Lord."

This affords a standard of membership so important, yet so simple and so easily observable, that by action under it, without overmuch of irritation, it would be possible to eliminate un-

PROBLEMS OF MEMBERSHIP.

worthy members from the Church. Let persistent neglect be defined within certain limits; it then raises but the question of fact. Has a given individual attended this ordinance during this period? Has he been privately exhorted? Does he persist in refusing without reason? Let him, then, be cited before a proper committee, and, failing to give satisfactory responses, let his connection with the Church be formally severed; subject, of course, to the usual appeal. This involves no innovation, but merely the application of existing provisions to a class of cases so large as to become a scandal, and to require uniform action on the part of the Church.

II.

THE SOCIAL ASSEMBLY.

Church membership should involve something of privilege not otherwise attainable; therefore, something to be prized. From this idea Methodism has steadily receded, until it may almost be said that a member of the Church has no

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

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PROBLEMS OF MEMBERSHIP.

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GENIUS OF METHODISM.

privileges unshared by a member of the congregation. The public ministry of the Word is for both alike, equally so the services of prayer; pastoral attention in sickness or affliction is offered freely; the privileges of fellowship are common to all who may be disposed to enjoy them. What, then, does it profit a man to take upon himself the vows of membership? Nothing whatever, save as it may satisfy his sense of duty. Thus it happens that Methodism has developed a larger body of adherents than any other denomination. But, clearly, something of privilege ought to accrue to those who have assumed the responsibilities of membership.

In some form or fashion there should be a regular assembly sacred to the membership alone, where, within the family circle, the more intimate questions of policy could be discussed. Primitive Methodism solved this question by the love-feast; but this has largely disappeared.

In certain States legal requirements have developed a congregational gathering for the elec-

PROBLEMS OF MEMBERSHIP.

tion of trustees; this may be germinal of better things. The same idea is also suggested by the definite recognition of such an assembly in the recently-adopted constitution. It is there provided that the membership, as such, may, if they desire, elect their trustees, and shall at least select their representative in the Lay Electoral Conference. Co-operative with these tendencies is the growing custom of an annual banquet, which unconsciously essays a union of the annual business session with the modified love-feast.

These things are suggestive, but must develop greatly, if they are to meet the social need. Annual assemblies can not exercise the necessary continuous power. Perhaps a connection could be established with the Quarterly Conference, by which that assembly would, by transformation, receive a new lease of power.

In such assemblies must the Church face the problem of increased individual privileges. It must make brotherhood a reality, and give assurances that through one or another department

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

of its activities his sufferings will be alleviated, his affliction find sympathy, and his hour of need be filled with practical counsel and assistance. Thus shall he come to appreciate the Church as the medium through which comes to him all the best, from fellow-man or from God.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GREATER CHURCH.

- I. THE CHURCH CONSCIOUSNESS.
- II. CONSOLIDATION OF BENEVOLENCES.
- III. ORGANIC UNION.

I.

THE CHURCH CONSCIOUSNESS.

The history of Methodism, as thus far reviewed, shows clearly that its several forms and usages are the joint product of the Genius of Methodism—a relatively fixed quantity—and the dominant trend of the times, which is a variable and sometimes unperceived quantity. Thus the Church first developed under the influence of an expanding civilization, and later under the influence of the democratic idea.

The trend of the times now appears to be in another direction and in response to another motive. We may reasonably anticipate that the future development of the Church will correspond to the new element, which is increasingly dominating the national life. It is an observation so trite as to be needless—except to set it in new relations—that the twentieth century promises to become the era of consolidation and combination. These tendencies have been so

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

pronounced as to compel universal recognition. Men have come to think in figures so colossal that it is vain to attempt to realize them. Everything is on an unprecedented scale. Millionaires are a genus, and the billionaire approaches. Benevolent enterprises are furthered by fabulous donations, and the standard for such undertakings seems ever to expend.

How will all this affect a Church whose very constitution tends to the elimination of wealth? Apparently adversely. The pace in benevolence seems to outstrip the capacity of the humbler thousands. Deeper consideration and closer observation contribute other elements to our thinking.

1. The average mind is being trained to think of larger enterprises, to be discontented with limited aspirations. Notably in Methodism has this been the case in the last decade. In 1896 the call was made for an endowment of five million dollars for the American University; in 1898 there was proposed a thank-offering to aggregate twenty million dollars; in 1902 a

THE GREATER CHURCH.

single connectional society called for an annual income equal to that from an endowment of seventy-five million dollars. Nor have these requests seemed visionary; on the contrary, they have appealed to the average man as being well within the range of the practicable.

2. One effect of a great enterprise is to develop a consciousness of power; it affords a standard by which possibilities can be gauged with far greater accuracy than from a larger aggregate diffused over a thousand unrelated smaller causes.

3. Such an enterprise tends to relate, in a more definite and increasingly organic way, all the elements which can contribute to the common cause. A great "trust" aims first at control of output, then to control manufacture, and, lastly, to bring the producers of the raw material within the organization. In this effort it draws into affiliation a number of related interests, until an entire industry, from its root in the ground to its efflorescence in the finished product, is controlled by a single power.

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

Since, then, these processes are affecting industrial and social life, it is to be expected that organic Methodism will also respond to them.

Already large ideas are permeating the Methodist Mind, as it comes face to face with the great problems of spiritual life. Not enough is it to snatch a few brands from the burning, but the primary need is to spiritualize all souls within the range of its influence; not enough to convert individuals, but environment must be transformed; not enough to triumph in one land or among one race, but the whole world must be won to the Christ life. In moments of enthusiasm have these ideas been recognized from the first; under their impetus have time and money and life been given. All this, however, in but an impulsive way, without a clear and definite recognition of the full significance of the problem. But now, under the influence of the new thinking, Methodism is arousing to an adequate recognition of its call to catholicity, to an exercise of an influence as wide as the human race.

THE GREATER CHURCH.

The elements inducing such a conviction are many. Simultaneous success in every quarter of the globe reverberates as a Macedonian cry, sanctioned by the Most High. When Europe, the several parts of Asia, Africa, and America, all testify to the adaptability of the Methodist Genius to diverse conditions, it is difficult to resist their cumulative evidence in favor of the world-idea. Simultaneously the United States has been exalted from a relatively negligible factor to a position as one of the great Powers in world politics, the protector of the South American continent and of the hoary Empire across the Western waters, and its destiny has been interlinked with that of other nations. The thought of the American citizen winging outward bears that of American Methodism as well. The interlinking of trade, the development of world-wide industrial interests, all force the same conclusion.

These conditions define the great problem; but it is seen at once to be beyond the scope of individual effort, too great for single congre-

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

gations, far too vast for unrelated endeavor. Either must the Church confess impotence, or develop a Church consciousness, by which all elements within its pale shall coalesce and be applied as a unit to the solving of the great question.

To this same conclusion does the social problem force the Church. The transformation of environment, the purging of the leprous spots in city slums, and in impure conventionality and custom, can be accomplished only by concerted effort, long continued. So also the spiritualization of life—rather than the conversion of individuals—transcends the power of units, becomes possible only as a catholic Church brings spiritual influences along a thousand avenues with preconcerted precision.

Thus the problem of Church consciousness is basal to a successful issue of any of the great questions of the century.

More than any other Protestant Church is Methodism endowed with the fundamental preconditions to such consciousness. The connec-

THE GREATER CHURCH.

tional idea emanated from the circumstances of her inception. Related by the dominant personality of one man, associated in closest fraternity, her earliest preachers emphasized the fact of organic connection. From a single Conference proceeded all the forms of American Methodism; its whole fabric was constructed by the genius of that fact. Militant loyalty has contributed its quota. Great denominational societies have become visible tokens of the connectional idea.

This much being premised, it must be added that later events have tended to eliminate Church consciousness or to prevent its development. The democratic impulse has always been away from centralization; it is an instinctive reaction from the idea of a fixed power, immutable by individual endeavor, which thus argues the relative inferiority of the citizen. This instinct has affected ecclesiastical affairs, rendering America the only country where Churches organized upon a congregational basis have markedly flourished. Had Methodism worked

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

from the laity upward, its cohesion and connectionalism could never have been attained; but it overcame this difficulty by the military character of its itineracy. Very gradually, however, the sense of loyalty, both in preacher and people, came to center in particular societies. This tendency increased markedly with the growth of stations, and was further accentuated by the extension of the time limit—and its final abolition—which developed the sense of a more fixed relation between pastors and people. To individual Churches the Methodist heart was loyal, and wealth came from sacrifice for the erection of temples which, in turn, ministered to a just local pride. But even in this there was a hampering consciousness of a divided allegiance. In the process of time, individual membership was, in common thought, related solely to the society in which it was registered; the great connectional idea was attenuated to the thread of benevolence which bound the individual to the General Boards.

It has not been sufficiently recognized that the

THE GREATER CHURCH.

Methodist layman is an itinerant. Whatever may be the causes, Methodist migration constitutes a peculiar problem, and one that has never received attention commensurate with its importance. While there are no statistics available, it is probable that several hundred thousand Methodists change their homes annually. Unconscious of a pledged relation to the general Church, there has come to them, with the breaking of local ties, a sense of liberty to neglect all Church relationship or to form new ones. Careful observation justifies the conclusion that more than a hundred thousand members are thus lost to the Church every year. Had these been conserved, Methodism would unquestionably show a quadrennial gain approximating a half million members. But this adverse numerical result, unfortunate though it is, is a small thing in comparison with the general effect upon Church consciousness.

The benevolent societies, which are the chief representatives of the connectional idea, place the emphasis upon the wrong word, as it were.

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

The impression has resulted from their presentations that their functions are not those of the whole Church, but only of that fraction thereof which has a particular interest in the given problem; that the support of these enterprises is an optional matter, instead of one of pledged responsibility.

To this same end have worked the very triumphs of Methodism. The approximation of other Churches to her social and evangelistic standards has reduced her former distinctiveness, and made the transition from Methodism to other bodies a relatively easy matter. In some Western communities this transference has enriched other communions at the expense of Methodism; nor is it an idle boast that in these sections Methodism has founded half the evangelical Churches of the State, and filled half the pulpits of other denominations.

Two conclusions thus force themselves upon the mind: the one that only a fundamental connectionalism could have at all survived the strain; the other, that Church consciousness, as

THE GREATER CHURCH.

such, is at a lower ebb in Methodism than in any other great ecclesiastical system.

The situation would be discouraging were it not for the fact that the actual survival of connectionalism under such adverse circumstances amounts to a demonstration of its inherent power. It is innate, and possessed of a resiliency that insures its reappearance as a dominant factor; it is but undergoing eclipse, and not extinction. This hope finds contributory facts.

Connectional consciousness is not to be identified with Methodist consciousness; the two are temporarily separable. Once a Methodist, always a Methodist, is a true proverb as far as concerns the Methodist mind. It is precisely the retention of distinctively Methodist qualities which has made her ministers and members such valued accessions to other communions. If, then, there is no diminution of these distinctive qualities, there is every probability that, sooner or later, these will find commensurate organic expression.

The migratory instinct of Methodism finds

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

expression within certain limits in great conventions and mass assemblies. This is so characteristic of the system that the word "Conference" has been by her pre-empted and given a special significance. For long these Conferences affected only the ministry, and thus among them safeguarded the connectional idea. But a marked feature of recent years has been the development of assemblies which appeal primarily to the laity. The Epworth League has done nothing more far-reaching than the creation of a series of assemblies ranging from the sub-district rally to the colossal International Conventions. The most conspicuous effect of such great meeting is the intensification of the connectional consciousness; they seem demonstrations of the actual greatness of the Church, appealing in a vivid and picturesque way to the imagination, and revealing the unsuspected strength of the tie that binds. This is perhaps largely on the imaginative, or even sentimental side, though human nature has none greater; but there have also been developed lay assem-

THE GREATER CHURCH.

blies for the actual performance of specific tasks. Great City Evangelization Assemblies, Lay Conferences—now given a distinctive place in the organism—point unmistakably in the same direction.

Commensurate with these forces has been the triumphant close of the great financial campaign, by which the vast sum of \$20,000,000 has been given by the common folk of Methodism as a thank-offering for a century of great blessing, and as a preparation for a century of anticipated vast undertakings. For four years the eyes of the world have been fixed upon the Church as, in her general capacity, she essayed this great task. Her success has awakened the admiration of observers, but, greatest of all, has made her conscious of the immense possibilities in the aggregate of her connectional power.

In this light the shadows flee, and a connectional consciousness seems, not only a possibility, but a fact; it requires only to be nurtured, and then harnessed to the problems of the Church.

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

The nurture of this dawning consciousness requires, first of all, that the individual be definitely related to the general Church. In theory this is already the case. By the terms of admission into the Church, the individual becomes a member, not of a congregation, but of the great fellowship which sums up all congregations. It requires, then, only a consensus of opinion to secure such an emphasis upon this aspect that it would stand clearly in the mind of every probationer, and by repetition would come erelong to be recognized by the greater portion of those now in full membership. But even such a clear understanding of theory would fail to meet the conditions. Practically, the individual comes not at all into contact with the Church, and the Church, as such, is unconscious of his existence. Logically the fact of individual membership should be registered in the archives of the general Church.* If this were

* Nothing is more patent than the failure of the system of epistolary transfer. Its efficiency depends solely upon the loyalty of the individual; and the more loyal he is to a given congregation, the less is he likely to transfer his affections to another. In the interim he unconsciously becomes absorbed

THE GREATER CHURCH.

done, it would also be possible, by relatively simple secretarial devices, to follow the individual in his migrations, and, in the interim of his connection with local societies, to confront him with the fact of his membership in the Church, and thus safely shepherd him to another fold. Thus he would be most conscious of his relation to the general Church precisely at the most critical period. Such provisions, it is confidently believed, would do more to nurture the dawning Church consciousness into robust activity than any other agency available. It is a logical outgrowth of accepted theory. Upon some such basis could be constructed a simple bit of machinery that, in the course of a generation, would save millions to the Church, and would do much to intensify Church consciousness.

in other matters. Nor does it greatly help to rely upon the assistance of the seventeen thousand ministers in the Church, chosen often for qualities other than attention to detail. The essential elements in an effective scheme would be a general bureau of registration, made cognizant of changes in membership through quarterly reports from presiding elders, and then communicating with the transferring individual and the pastor within whose vicinage he had located. Such a bureau should have power, under carefully guarded conditions, to grant certificates of membership.

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

In a way somewhat similar is it possible to apply the power thus developed to the general activities of the Church. A relationship by registration goes far, but a relationship in power is a greater matter. The mechanical problem of to-day is the transmission of energy. Niagara could run the factories of half the continent could its full energy be conducted to the point of application. So the present problem of spiritual dynamics is to concentrate the diffused surplus of energy and apply it to a specific task. This involves the reduction of personal energy to a portable form. No medium perfectly meets these conditions, but the combination of prayer and wealth affords a usable method. Hence to relate the individual to the Church by a definite contribution to the general Church as such, and as evidence of confidence in its administrative capacity, would more nearly solve the second element in the problem than any means as yet suggested.

To these influences would be added the consequent incarnation of the general Church idea.

THE GREATER CHURCH.

Presiding elders would become its representatives, and bishops would be the larger stars in the firmament, open to the vision of all who chose to look upon the ecclesiastical sky.

II.

CONSOLIDATION OF BENEVOLENCES.

The immediate problem of constructive statesmanship relates to the consolidation of the benevolent agencies of the Church. These took their present form as spontaneous and unrelated responses to diverse needs which came to the attention of the Church at different times. More recently it has been recognized that the organizations thus resulting can not be assimilated into the structure of the Church without careful revision of their inter-relations. Such a scrutiny was, in 1900, intrusted to a General Conference Commission.

The facts of the case seem to be these:

1. Local Churches and pastors have long felt the strain of a too frequent presentation of financial claims.

2. Various methods have been devised to ob-

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

viate this difficulty. Mostly they center around one of two ideas,—personal canvass, involving much machinery and more explanation; or the “omnibus collection,” which works to the detriment of all the benevolences.

3. The benevolent societies have felt the strain, and have resorted to appeal, exhortation, and assessment; but without proportionate increase in the ratio of giving.

4. The several societies have elastic and ill-defined boundaries, and this tends to prevent definite impressions. Collections taken for “missions,” a name historically sacred to work among unevangelized nations, are, in considerable part, expended in domestic enterprises. Educational work is presented under two and sometimes three heads; a single phase of “Church Extension” has appropriated that significant title.

5. All this involves some duplication of machinery; but it affects public sentiment out of all proportion to its importance.

6. Yet these organizations have a definite

THE GREATER CHURCH.

corporate existence, and vast sums are involved in technicalities, and difficult problems are presented if their identity should in any way be destroyed.

There are yet other elements to the situation; but these will serve as an index, and show that the Church is confronted by an amazing problem, which it can solve only by finding some clue which will serve as a sure guide through this labyrinth of legal and ecclesiastical, personal and prejudicial complexities.

There are several negative conclusions which help to such a discovery.

There is a difficulty in finding a natural basis for consolidation, which will at the same time so reduce the number of agencies as to compensate for the inevitable confusion. A logical division would be as follows:

- a. Missions (in the foreign field only).
- b. Church Extension (domestic missions and church-building).
- c. Education (Board of Education and Freedmen's Aid Society).

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

d. Propaganda (Tract Society and Sunday-school Union, Evangelism).

e. Pension Agency (Superannuates' Fund).

But this scheme, though logical, affords a minimum of gain; for the division of work practically counterbalances the consolidation elsewhere. Nor would such a scheme fail to arouse the greatest prejudice.

This, however, leads to the real source of difficulty. Why should individual prejudice be allowed to counteract the carefully-purposed plans of the Church? If the Church has authority—and none come into full connection without a voluntary acceptance of such authority—then are these general demands of the Church a matter of right, and not of individual benevolence. Great connectional enterprises are misnamed; they are rather the enterprises of a sovereign ecclesiastical organization. Let us examine this idea a little further.

The connectional societies which solicit benevolent contributions were organized independ-

THE GREATER CHURCH.

ently of the Church,—were first private corporations, and, as such, could present their claims to the people only on the basis of general good will. This was the origin of the method. When, then, these societies, by General Conference enactment, became a part of the organism of the Church, they came into a mixed status. It is indeed a matter for grave questioning whether the Church can delegate its sovereign power of financial assessment to any subordinate organization. At any rate, the original idea of “benevolence” was continued; thus developing in the minds of the membership the idea that support was optional, and laying upon each society the necessity of convincing individual members that both wisdom and benevolence prompted to such contributions.

As a matter of logical analysis it appears that the Church has delegated to these societies responsibilities rather than privileges. It is through them that connectional activities are carried on; aside from them the Church, as such,

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

has but little conscious activity. If, then, they constitute the general Church activity, it is obvious that, logically, they should appeal to the individual with the same authority as is possessed by any general Church enactment; and individual members, by the very fact of such formal connection, should be required to maintain them.

At this juncture in the argument certain helping considerations can be attained from an examination of actual solutions of similar problems in other fields. In the process of that amalgamation which has been the chief characteristic of recent years, certain corporations—notably those dealing with transportation—have found themselves unable to merge their identity on account of legal embarrassments. The problem thus created was finally solved by the development of an overorganization holding the stock of all, and to which the other corporations were practically subject. The function of such an organization was indeed primarily directive;

THE GREATER CHURCH.

but the thought is available for the problem of the Church.*

It can not be said that there is in this suggestion any departure from the true line of Methodist development. Indeed, this is precisely the goal toward which unconscious assimilation has steadily been working. It involves only an intelligent perception of this fact, and

*If, then, it be impracticable to merge existing connectional societies, it is at least feasible to create one general collective agency, which shall merge the claims of all, and present itself to the people as representative of all general activities, and clothed with the full authority of the Church to require support on the basis of loyalty rather than impulse. Nor does this require the creation of more machinery, for already this is in existence; for this is nothing other than the Church itself rousing to a general consciousness and asserting itself in general activity.

There would thus result certain specific advantages :

1. A general treasury and a general committee would be required for the supervision of the task, and probably also the services of one or two secretaries; but these could be provided for by reduction of forces in other directions.

2. The six hundred presiding elders would become instantly available as field representatives of the Church; they could arrange in their respective fields the details of this purely business proposition.

3. Local organizations could be assessed upon some equitable combination of membership and assessable funds. By this arrangement, except where special conditions existed, an aggregate of perhaps ten cents a month for each member could be asked of each Church, to be remitted to the central treasury once a quarter. This would at once create a fund approximating three and half million dollars, or nearly

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

then the intelligent acceleration of organic tendencies.

But the largest result of all would be the instant creation of a general Church consciousness, which is the essential prelude to the widest possible usefulness. The Church would realize its power; she herself would be the fountain-head of beneficent activity. Every member would thrill with a conscious participation in

double the total amount now given from spasmodic benevolent impulses.

4. The funds thus accruing could be apportioned in fixed ratio among the existing societies; by them to be administered in accordance with present methods. This would, however, reduce the work of each society by nearly half, and, in consequence, would also decrease the cost of administration and the number of salaried officers, thus accomplishing that retrenchment which has long been demanded in many quarters.

5. In addition to what may be styled required funds, an appeal could be made at stated periods to the benevolence of the people in behalf of particular causes. At Easter-tide or Harvest Home, when the heart of the Church is especially tender with grateful thought, the people would beyond a doubt tender a thank-offering of many thousands of dollars.

6. Not only would a large income be thus realized, but it would increase automatically, in exact ratio to the increase of the membership; thus automatically meeting the enlarging responsibilities laid upon the Church by success in its general undertakings.

7. Nor does it admit of a doubt that the General Church would become the beneficiary of many fortunes, conditioned on being administered in the interest of general Church activities and constituting a perpetual force in the moral situation.

THE GREATER CHURCH.

great achievements. Loyalty would intensify, enthusiasm become contagious; losses in membership would largely cease; the ratio of progress would astonish the world. Methodism would stand again as a monument of Divine power.

III.

ORGANIC UNION.

“Organic Union” is a phrase first bandied dubiously between North and South, and more recently attaining to a serious dignity. At present it deals with the possibility of an organic union of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. It is axiomatic that there is a closer resemblance between these two than between any other branches of Methodism. None the less, even here, there are differences of such importance as to render this the most delicate of questions.

1. The conditions under which the division of the Church occurred gave rise to recrimination and prejudice, culminating in the violation

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

of the fundamental law of both Churches, which forbids brother going to law with brother. Though these prejudices have in large part subsided, they are none the less active factors in the situation. The Church in the North has accepted the Southern view of the relation of a Church to a community, and the Southern has accepted the Northern view of slavery. Events have made possible the resumption of fraternal relations; but this is a matter quite less than the issue of organic union.

2. Southern Methodism from the exigency of its origin gave to the Episcopacy a higher place in its organism. Since then events have accentuated this tendency, while a reverse development has characterized the original Church. This is fundamental to the economy of each, and would constitute an obstacle to union almost as grave as those arising with reference to such a relation with a non-episcopal Church.

3. The Methodist Episcopal Church has never been restrained by geographical considerations, and has organized a double layer of Confer-

THE GREATER CHURCH.

ences in the South,—one for the white and another for the black population. This gives rise to a double difficulty,—the technical and the local prejudices arising from a duplication of work by the two Methodisms. But greater than this is the whole race problem. Southern Methodism in 1866 organized its Negro membership into a separate Church, and has since remained exclusively the Church of the white people. The Methodist Episcopal Church accepted into her own membership many thousands of these Negro Methodists. This constitutes a direct divergence in policy admitting of no compromise.

4. In addition are many details of discipline, relating to probation, lay membership in Annual Conferences, and other matters not in themselves important, but constituting a vast aggregate.

It is obvious that these diverging factors could be eliminated only by an irresistible affection, or by the mandate of evolution working quietly but imperiously. Are such forces in operation?

There has been a gradual *rapprochement*, be-

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

ginning with overtures for fraternal intercourse in 1872, and developing quietly in the thirty years which have since elapsed. It is a respectable sentiment, but not a coercive one. It has had a measure of triumph which may be noted.

(a) An agreement was reached respecting certain mission fields; by this, Porto Rico fell to the Methodist Episcopal Church, and Cuba to the Southern Church; in Japan it was decided to unite the theological seminaries; and delightfully fraternal relations were developed in Korea.

(b) More recently the missionary agencies of both Churches have been able to unite their publishing enterprises in China. This was accomplished by conservative deliberation extending through several years, but finally consummated in a single day.

(c) About the same time, by a series of suggestions and by assumption of authority on the part of one body, a joint commission for the revision of the several hymn-books has been constituted; and the results of its work will doubt-

THE GREATER CHURCH.

less constitute a strong tie between the two Churches, as will also a common order of service and catechism.

(d) Yet more recently has been the inception of joint educational work in Oklahoma, where the Epworth University will look to both Methodisms for its support and patronage.

(e) To these elements must be added the connecting link between young people in the International Epworth League.

It is obvious that the most promising features are in connection with missions. It is conceivable that in China or Japan these tendencies might eventuate in union. The question is complicated rather than simplified thereby; for the relation of such a Japanese Methodism to the parent Churches might then be as great a problem as the one which now exists; indeed more: for such a Japanese Methodism, if wisely achieved, ought to be inclusive of all work under the several branches of Methodism. Nor would this seem either difficult or hopeless; but rather a natural result where broadly sympathetic men

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

face a common evangelistic problem. It is to be observed that there are not lacking signs that the ultimate destiny of Methodism upon the mission fields is independence within national lines; and this has been asserted upon the floor of the General Conference. The deliberate creation of central Conferences, the adoption of the principle of the Missionary Episcopate, all point in this direction.

Anticipating such a conclusion, it may be affirmed that union in missionary enterprises contributes nothing to the problem of organic union other than a fine illustration of the fraternal spirit. It suffices, however, to raise a yet greater question, as to the relation to be sustained by such national missionary Churches to the parent organizations. There must needs be some vital connection, and some effective supervision; for mission fields will continue to require financial assistance, which can not logically be granted without some supervisory power.

But, as has been seen, these parent bodies are themselves numerous, and must therefore devise

THE GREATER CHURCH.

some common medium for the expression of their rights and the rendering of assistance. Thus arises to the view a vague outline of ecumenical supervision. But instantly the thought is suggested, it is seen that the thing is already in existence. In 1881, in the city of London, representatives of all branches of Methodism gathered for an Ecumenical Conference. It was akin to the primitive Conferences of Mr. Wesley in that it had advisory powers only. So successful was it that it has been twice reassembled at intervals of ten years. Possessed only of advisory powers, it has nevertheless exercised a positive influence, and given a magnificent demonstration of the essential unity of Methodism in general. At the last session certain of its advices were formulated in recommendations; and thus the Conference felt its way to a greater authority. It fully accords with the genius of Methodism, that advisory institutions presently become administrative. It would be possible, then, through such an agency as this, to fix the relation of missionary Methodism to the sup-

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

porting bodies, thus solving not only this problem, but creating a Greater Methodism, to which all branches might sustain a definite relation.

Curiously enough, from this very advisory Conference comes light upon the specific issue of organic union. For in this body it was recommended informally that, as soon as feasible, all branches of Episcopal Methodism among the Negro race unite for the formation of one great Church. It is apparent that the carrying out of such a policy would create in the United States a branch of Methodism logically in the same relation as would be held by national mission Churches. But it would also relieve the situation as between the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and would go far toward making possible an organic union.

At the same time a movement has been inaugurated among the non-episcopal branches of Methodism, looking to a closer relationship; perhaps ultimate amalgamation. Such a movement, crowned with success, would resolve the

THE GREATER CHURCH.

great Methodist family into five principal groups:

- The Methodist Episcopal Churches;
- The English and Colonial Methodisms;
- The American Non-Episcopal Churches;
- The Negro Methodist Churches;
- The National Missionary Churches.

No one of these groups could exercise a predominant influence in Ecumenical Councils; and yet they present well-defined units of thought and admirable administrative divisions.

Under such conditions the problem of organic union might or might not admit of solution; but this would be a matter of less concern if, in place of it, the problem of the greater Methodism should come to hold a place in the heart of the Churches. The rise of an Ecumenical Methodist Church thus vaguely foreshadowed would involve the fulfillment of prophecy from not over friendly sources, that the future of Methodism is more significant for humanity than that of any other existing ecclesiastical organism.

CHAPTER IX.

CULTURAL ISSUES.

- I. THE SPIRITUAL PROBLEM.
- II. THE INTELLECTUAL PROBLEM.

I.

THE SPIRITUAL PROBLEM.

The spiritual problem as it confronts the present-day Methodism is twofold. The first phase results from the changed ideas respecting the beginnings of definite Christian experience, while the second centers in the revived interest in the highest spiritual life. In the end these questions merge, and so in reality constitute but one problem.

Primitive Methodism held largely to the idea of instantaneous conversion, preceded by deep and painful conviction, and followed by a conscious glory. Under the conditions which then obtained this was the natural expression of the spiritual life, and hence the type most common. Where men had lived in sin, the awakening consequent upon the clear preaching of the Methodist itinerant could not be other than a shock to their sensibilities, from which men of a habit

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

of free expression would cry out ; and when such groaning penitents grasped amid their contrition the simple idea of salvation by faith, the result could not be other than a sudden ecstasy. In dealing with such conditions and witnessing such experiences Methodism formed her evangelistic methods and her phraseology,—which, after the manner of things, once crystallized into form, have long survived the conditions which produced them.

New conditions have developed. For the most part the constituency amid which Methodism carries on its work does not consist of out-breaking sinners, but of people of some moral purpose and a certain conscious conformity to conventional standards, and whose outer lives do not differ greatly from those of more spiritual individuals. Nor does this reflect upon Methodism ; this is her heritage and the result of her work. When she began, there were no Methodists ; but now successive generations have exerted their influence upon social life with these magnificent results.

CULTURAL ISSUES.

It is but natural, then, that the transition from a conventional and moral life to the first consciousness of spirituality should be less abrupt; natural, also, that children in Methodist homes should frequently develop an active spirituality, without experiencing anything approaching an acute crisis. For a period these new phenomena were the cause of great intellectual unrest,—it seemed difficult to fit them into the general system of Methodist theology and practice. But the intellectual problem has been solved; it is recognized that the spiritual life begins through various forms, and that the emphasis placed heretofore upon a certain type of experience belongs, rather, to its reality and its validity. Nor does this involve any radical change of thought, for conversion was emphasized not for itself, but because by the early Methodists it was identified with spirituality.

The solution of the intellectual problem has not, as yet, greatly affected the formulas of speech or the methods of activity; hence arises an inconsistency between faith and practice

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

which results in the partial paralysis of effort. This inconsistency is an inevitable stage in the transition; it is not immoral and not in itself to be deplored; it becomes an evil only when it evinces signs of permanency. It is evident, however, that progress lies only in adjusting formulas and practice to the new conceptions, and not in forcing back the tide of intellectual ideas. But this in itself presents a crisis. The masses, whether of Methodism or elsewhere, think in symbols, in formulas and customs. To assail these is to arouse popular antipathy, to produce anarchy or spiritual reaction. This constitutes the real issue. It can find its solution only in the development of new agencies for inducing spirituality, so superior to the old that they will be accepted for their intrinsic worth, and thus lead to the gradual abandonment of the old formulas and practices.

How these new agencies are to be developed is a great question, but fortunately there are a few helping facts. The vast majority of those who are definitely attempting the spiritual life

CULTURAL ISSUES.

formed their decision so to do in youth ; but very few persons have assumed that attitude after thirty years of age. A query thus arises : Is this proof that Christianity appeals primarily to the immature, that its message is not convincing in the light of reason and experience ? Rather otherwise. The all-pervasiveness of the present forms of Christianity operates as an intellectual atmosphere. The moment a boy or girl begins to think, the question comes up for acceptance or rejection ; and for this reason the great majority of professing Christians become such in the years of budding manhood or womanhood ; for it is then that young life becomes conscious of the "thinking principle." Rejection of Christianity at that time is caused either by the faulty presentation or by a strong bias to evil. In this latter case there is little likelihood of a change for the better except through some great crisis in life. In the former case, however, much depends upon circumstances,—the problem may clear under wise teaching, and, indeed, often does. But it is apparent that the

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

character of individual contact with Christian teaching and practice, prior to the age of seventeen or eighteen, is commonly decisive with reference to the spiritual life. We have then to inquire concerning the medium through which this contact is ordinarily secured. The answer is obvious,—there is but one general medium, and that is the Sunday-school. Christian home life is far from being general, and while it is to be conceded that, where this obtains, its influence is incomparable, none the less does the general truth remain as aforesaid.

The true function of the Sunday-school is to present Christianity to its members so that when the individual judgment becomes operative, they shall instinctively accept the Christian standard.

There is but one power adequate to produce such a result; that is, a vision of the real Christ. It is obvious, therefore, that the life and character of Jesus should be the supreme—almost the exclusive—elements in the subject-matter of the teaching. This involves three subtopics: (1) The historical narrative; (2) The inter-

CULTURAL ISSUES.

pretation of these facts to the thought through human lives; (3) The application of his character and teaching to current living. It is obvious that this involves a practical reconstruction of Sunday-school methods; but this opens an endless discussion of detail, into which we need not enter.

It has been greatly regretted by leading observers of evangelical religion that the power of the Churches to reach the larger portion of the public is waning; conversions are becoming, so it is said, relatively individual instead of being a social epidemic as formerly, and are almost counterbalanced by relapses. There is, however, no reason to question the power of the Sunday-school to reach the children of the country. That is to say, it is possible to bring Christianity to the attention of every young person as he reaches the age of "awakened thought," and thus to solicit his allegiance at the most susceptible period. Thus the evangelical problem defines itself, and is resolved into a single issue,—an adequate presentation of the person

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

of Jesus, so that a real vision shall call for the allegiance of every boy and girl. Imagination will co-operate; there is naught at fault save the manner of presentation. The episode of the Damascus road must repeat itself many million-fold.

* * * *

The second phase of the problem urges to similar conclusions. The ideal of Christian conduct and experience, as phrased by the founder of Methodism, still endures. It answers every aspiration. But here again was an identification of process with result. Because the definite presentation of the possibility of such an ideal induced a crisis in many lives, which when met by an adequate self-surrender inaugurated an epoch of spiritual glory, it has been concluded that this was the only natural process. Therefore, insistence has been placed upon means rather than results; thus ignoring the fact that under more normal conditions the ideal will not burst suddenly upon the mental vision, nor will it come as the rising sun, but rather it

CULTURAL ISSUES.

attains its full glory as quietly and silently blossoms the flower. It is evident that conclusions attained by experimental methods in the critical times which witnessed the development of Methodism, will not be all-comprehensive after a century of evangelical faith and thought has developed new conditions. Nor does the recognition of this fact involve in any way the abandonment of the essential idea of a life perfected in love.

As a matter of history, however, it is true that the broader conception of the process of attaining the ideal has always led to a lowered idea of product, until the ideal has at times been regarded as idealistic, thus ignoring the obvious truth that an "impractical ideal" loses, by that very relation, an indispensable element. None the less there has been a distinct falling off of spiritual aspiration, and a contentment with a relatively lower spirituality. Both as cause and result of this has been the decadence of institutions particularly adapted to spiritual culture. For this purpose no method ever devised

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

is superior to the class-meeting at its best. But the class-meeting as an institution has vanished, never to return.

The two great sources of inspiration to the highest living are, the ideal of Jesus; and, secondly, the goodly fellowship of the apostles and saints. The class-meeting emphasized the experience of neighborhood saints, often, indeed, with a plentiful lack of discrimination, but, on the whole, with great results. But other evidences are equally available. The problem, then, is to secure such a presentation of these various evidences as will enable men to understand the Christ life, and the means by which it can be reproduced in the individual life.

In the presentation of such evidences the individual view-point must ever be kept in mind. Therefore the sermon, which is first general, and but incidentally individual, can not fully meet the situation. There must be abundant opportunity for question and response; for amplification of points obscure to one or another,—all of which comes only through some form of class

CULTURAL ISSUES.

exercise. Therefore it is clear that somewhere in the economy of the Church must be found room for classes definitely devoted to the culture of spirituality.

As already indicated, the sermon can not meet these conditions; no more can the prayer-service, which, as its name implies, is aspirational rather than cultural; and also by reason of times and seasons, and more of customs, reaches but a small percentage of the membership. Equally impractical is it that young people's services should be thus utilized; for they are, in large part, conducted by persons in the earlier stages of religious life; and should this cease to be the case they would cease also to be young people's meetings. Nor can this need be met by the creation of new agencies, for the whole tendency of present pressure is toward the elimination of services from an all-too-crowded calendar. There remains, then, no general Church institution but the Sunday-school,—than which, however, none has greater possibilities of adaptation.

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

The function of the Sunday-school, as previously developed, extended to a period shortly subsequent to the awakening of the "thinking principle." Thereafter, unless a new function be devised, it is aimless; and, in point of fact, this has largely been the case. How admirably does the idea of classes for spiritual culture supplement the idea of classes to induce the beginning of the spiritual life! The two constitute a perfect whole, bringing all people within the range of this appeal. Not only so, but the existing structure of classes meets the requirement for a true cultural agency, and requires only to be administered with this purpose definitely in view. So strong has been the unconscious trend in this direction that it has forced a style of teaching in which the miscellaneous data of the lesson have served merely as a pretext for the discussion of practical spiritual questions.

Thus from every point of view the Sunday-school appears to be the agency by which the spiritual problem can be met and solved. This

CULTURAL ISSUES.

is a conclusion that should thrill the Church with joy; for by this means access is had to every home in the land, and a chance is secured for the adequate presentation of Christian truth, not only to the youth, but through them to parents and elders. But, most of all, this is an agency which can use every atom of lay energy, and bring it to bear directly upon the problem in hand. The success of Methodism has ever been commensurate with the activity of the laity; the function of the preacher has been, in its best days, to inspire and direct this activity. With new conditions and the abandonment of older methods, the Church found difficulty in gearing this vast energy to the task. It appears now that this can be done in a way so simple as to compare spiritually with the results which might accrue mechanically when electricity is secured direct from coal.

The changes in Sunday-school methods required, in order to effect these results, are neither many nor complicated. There is, first, a change of ideal, by which the greatness of the

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

institution will dawn upon the Church. Second, there is a change of lesson methods; for if the gross scope and purport of the institution be changed, it is obvious that the lessons must center in that larger purpose; they must teach Christ and Christlikeness, rather than the Bible as such. The one is primarily a spiritual idea, the other primarily historical and exegetical. In the third place, the personnel of the officary of the schools must be rendered coextensive with the highest and best personalities of the local Churches. It must be held a high honor, and one to be coveted, to be called of the Church to this task.

There are other and lesser modifications, which will come as a sequence to these three; but with these alone must come such an accession of power as shall redound to the glory of the great name borne by the universal Church.

One other main element in the spiritual problem remains to be considered. In order to secure the beginning of the spiritual life or a definite spiritual culture, it is not sufficient merely

CULTURAL ISSUES.

to produce intellectual conviction. Rather is it required to focus the thought upon these things, either through a considerable period of time or with unusual intensity, so that the will will consent and faith may become operative. To this end there has never been devised a mode superior to continued services with special presentation. Here the function of the preacher is indispensable; for the task is not to present data or to argue into conviction, but to organize the facts and ideas already placed in the mind so that they will move the individual with irresistible power. Nor does this involve anything derogatory to individual sovereignty; for it is evident that unless facts and conceptions basal to such a conclusion are already dormant in the mind, there can be no exercise over him of such an influence.

It is plain, however, that since pastoral functions have developed diverse types of the ministry, and not all have the gift of evangelism, that in these conditions lies the reason for the development of a class of evangelists. This

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

being so, the Church must take notice thereof, and so relate this indispensable class to its system as to avoid the difficulties which arise from an irresponsible activity on their part.*

The great idea under which these facts and ideas can be most effectively presented is that of immortality. In the early days the itinerants were fire-driven to their task with a "Woe is me!" impending over the head of each, should he prove recalcitrant. But this flaming conviction of the horrors of hell, which was equally potent over preacher and auditors, has largely died away. Many conditions have led thereto. The idea of immortality is not less truly held, but the new conceptions have not yet been organized into a vivid picture with power to react upon the imagination. This must yet be done, and so link the spiritual problem to the intellectual task which confronts the Church.

*The first steps in this direction have been taken by the appointment of Conference evangelists; but it would seem easily possible to direct them from some central office to which application might be made by the Churches desiring such services. For this purpose some of the mechanism of the lecture bureaus might be adapted.

CULTURAL ISSUES.

II.

THE INTELLECTUAL PROBLEM.

Within the last century, and more particularly within the last generation, the methods of human thought have undergone a marvelous transformation. The results have now pervaded all classes in the establishment of new standards of judgment and discrimination. It is clear that along with this intellectual revolution must go a change in the method of expressing religious ideas. It is not, indeed, to be supposed that the facts of Christianity can be changed at will, but the same facts may admit of different statement. This constitutes the intellectual problem.

If the influences which have so modified popular thought can be understood, and if a similar modification of religious and spiritual expression can be attained, there is every reason to anticipate that any existing inertia of formal religion will give way to unprecedented revival, and that the soul-hunger of the people arising

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

from continued deprivation of acceptable spiritual ministration will result in an unusual trend toward Christianity.

There is no difficulty in understanding the force which has modified popular thought; it is evident to all observers that it is modern science. But it is necessary to discriminate. Science is not a given body of facts and principles. A man of science is not one who assents to certain principles propounded by authority, or who believes certain facts respecting botany or biology. One might do all this, and yet be essentially dogmatic and unscientific. The essence of modern science is in its method, rather than in its results. In brief, the scientific method is the means which the best thought of the ages has developed for ascertaining truth.

It consists, first, in inductive analysis or careful mastery of the real facts; second, in synthesis, or careful putting of the facts in their real relations to each other; and, third, in verification, or the careful testing of the conclusions by every available means. When this has been

CULTURAL ISSUES.

done, the result is admitted to the body of scientific truth. The scientific method has triumphed in so many fields of experience, and its results have contributed so wonderfully to human progress, that many men have come to have a greater reverence for science than for anything else in the world. Human reverence is thus shifting from institutions and things and persons to truth itself. This must be reckoned a sign of spiritual progress.

Not only do men revere science, but in general they have come to form their thoughts by it, or at least, in a certain rude way, to conform to its methods in their common thinking. This constitutes the greatest revolution which the nineteenth century witnessed.

The field of science is truth; it does not destroy, but reveals and purifies it. There is no occasion, then, for Christianity to place obstacles in its way; some forms may suffer, but the facts will shine brighter and be more potent for good. Man will no longer accept religious teaching on authority, but only by being convinced of

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

its truth. In the present century religion must apply the scientific method to all spiritual phenomena; such as, the spiritual evolution of the race, the spirit-filled life of the individual, and, above all, to the full spiritual revelation in the Son of man.

1. The spiritual evolution of the race is easily open to observation. The Old Testament is a transcript of its essential facts, and a store-house for the religious investigator. It shows the clearest and most powerful line of development; but with it can be correlated the observed facts of spiritual aspiration and struggle in other lands.

2. The unit of racial evolution is the individual. Accordingly, in individual spiritual experience is to be found a suggestive group of phenomena. This begins with the first manifestations of conscience; appears, further, in the struggle to conform to its dictates, until, after many failures, the soul attains to co-operation with the Divine, and trusting thereto ap-

CULTURAL ISSUES.

proximates the ideal of the Christ life, and, as a luminous crowning glory, a few rare souls are endued with the Holy Spirit and all that this signifies.

3. The life of Jesus is a sinless life, and thus presents phenomena of the rarest kind; it admits of no explanation save that he was God incarnate. Therefore his sayings and his deeds possess absolute authority, both as a revelation of Divine character and as showing the human conditions necessary to a right relation to God.

Such, briefly, is the range of phenomena from which science is asked to draw conclusions. In this intellectual task which devolves upon all Churches, Methodism has a unique and important place. She has accumulated data which must serve as the basis of such an analysis. Her whole tenor of thought is empirical; she stands with a mind open alike to science and to the more delicate phenomena of the spiritual life. Because of this absence of bias, she is able to enter upon the investigation with a judicial

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

spirit. She has no peculiar dogmas to defend or establish; for she has not as yet cast her conclusions into the hard and fast forms of doctrine, but holds them responsive to unfolding intellectual tendencies. It is not too much to believe that the theologian of Methodism, when he arises and attains a synthesis of facts and principles now held in the Methodist mind in a more or less unrelated way, will produce the most comprehensive formula of spiritual truth ever enunciated by the human intellect, and will lay the whole Christian future under obligation to himself.

It is to be admitted, indeed, that the task is one of great difficulty. Dogma, prejudice, and ignorance, all obscure the facts, and render impartial discrimination a matter of great toil. But the results of such an achievement will be great indeed. Religion will add to its acknowledged sanctity the reverence which men now yield to scientific verity; it will be accepted with enthusiasm. Feeling and emo-

CULTURAL ISSUES.

tions will no longer determine spiritual growth, but a reverent knowledge. There will be "intelligent Christians," and the idea of the prophet that "all shall know God, from the greatest to the least," will be fulfilled. "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea."

CHAPTER X.

THE PLACE OF THE METHODIST
IDEA.

- I. WORLD HISTORY.
- II. THE REPUBLICATION OF THE RECORD.
- III. THE INTERPRETATION.
- IV. APPROPRIATION.

I.

WORLD HISTORY.

History in the modern sense is an explanation of results; it traces development. It is not greatly concerned with such events, however important in their own day, as have contributed little to the actual development of the race. World history must deal with the great factors in world development.

World history can not be written at the present time except in the spirit of prophecy; for only so can one attain that conception of the ultimate world-form which is essential to the perception of the great factors in its achievement. That is to say, there can be no world history apart from faith in God. To the unbeliever the term has no significance.

Concerning this ultimate world-form, prophecy gives decisive answer; it is often vague concerning the mode of attainment, but the result is never left in doubt. Perhaps the best

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

formula for this world-form is found in the "prayer universal;" the very fact that it is accepted as a formula alike of hope and consecration by the overwhelming majority of those who work for the betterment of man is itself no feeble indorsement of its accuracy. To the believer in Christian truth it has Divine sanction; for to his thought it is as thoroughly established as though it were already achieved. This formula is—

"Thy kingdom come ; Thy will be done
As in heaven, so on earth."

The characteristics of the language in which these words were first spoken, fix the meaning of the formula beyond question. Accordingly the ultimate world-form can be nothing less than a kingdom on earth in which the Divine will is done with heavenly perfectness.

Such being the ultimate condition, it is evident that world history at the present time resolves itself into a study of those things, past and present, which manifestly contribute to this achievement. It is obvious, also, that world

THE PLACE OF THE METHODIST IDEA.

history is a much-neglected study; for though genius has exhausted its energies in tracing political and philosophical, moral and social development, the history of the struggle of the race toward holiness of life remains largely unwritten. World history in this true sense deals with spiritual factors; obscure men become its heroes, and martyr fires blazon its pages.

If now the ultimate world-form be known as the "Kingdom of Heaven," world history becomes essentially the record of the founding and expanding of that kingdom; but since the content of that idea is holiness or perfect conformity to the Divine Will, the establishment and expansion of the Kingdom of Heaven is seen to involve a twofold process:

1. Provisions for Holiness.
2. The Appropriation of the Provisions.

To pass from a state of moral depravity, such as characterized the ancient world, into a condition of heavenly conformity with the Divine Will, was a transition so beyond human realization as to be undreamed of by even the best rep-

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

representatives of ancient morality. To effect this transition there was needed a revelation of the Divine Will. So unknown were its imperatives that the highest philosophies concerning it seem but inferences from indeterminate data; but once the Divine Will were known, there still remained the inherent powerlessness of man to conform thereto; hence, in making such a conformity possible, there was needed the reconstruction of man's nature, or his regeneration. The first need was met in "God manifest in the flesh" as Jesus Christ; the second in the regenerating power of the Spirit. But both the Incarnation and Pentecost were events limited by time and space; it was necessary that the revelation of the Divine Will be made permanent, and that the regenerating factor be constantly present. These factors were supplied in an accurate record of the sayings and doings of the incarnate Christ, and in the abiding presence of the Holy Ghost to interpret the Divine Will and to enable conformity thereto.

The history of these events comprises the

THE PLACE OF THE METHODIST IDEA.

founding of the "kingdom," or the making possible the ultimate world-form. All else deals with the using these forces for the expansion of the kingdom.

It is unnecessary to consider the early phases of this development; for, however abundant were the provisions for holiness, and however adequate, there came a time when these provisions were so wholly forgotten and obscured that holiness of life was as rare as it had been prior to the Incarnation and to Pentecost; and the problem confronting the Divine Mind was essentially unaltered.

There was, in fact, a complex of difficulties. The form which the required revelation of the Divine Will had taken was an accurate record of the life of the Incarnate Christ preserved in the Gospels. Bound up with this record was the history of the outpouring of the regenerating Spirit, and of the first appropriation by men of the provisions for holiness; the two constituting the New Testament. How fundamental to all holiness of life this record was,

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

and yet remains, is at once evident. Apart from it there is no adequate knowledge of the Divine Will, hence no possibility of intelligent conformity thereto; apart from it there is no record of the first outpouring of the Spirit, and no record of the steps whereby men first appropriated the provision for holiness, nor of the satisfying experiences which ensued.

Yet there came a period when this essential record was forgotten and unknown; it had become a prohibited book to read which was to incur ostracism and perhaps death. It existed only in musty manuscripts written in a language unknown to the people and equally unknown to the major portion of those who "ministered" unto them in spiritual things. Hence, then, as with the ancient world, there was no revelation and no adequate provision for holiness.

Not alone was this the case, but so hampered was the human mind that there seemed no opportunity for it to regain access to the record which alone could tell it of things essential to

THE PLACE OF THE METHODIST IDEA.

spiritual development. The densest ignorance pervaded all classes; investigation was decried and prohibited, and the prohibition enforced by sanguinary punishments. No man could utter opinions contrary to the sentiments of those in power without endangering himself and all connected with him. Still further, the very idea of holiness from which would spring any impulse to seek for the forgotten records, was ridiculed and despised; it was esteemed an unnecessary and fanatical conception; those who occupied the position of exemplars went farthest in their persecution of the pure and good. A revelation was esteemed unneedful; conformity with an unintelligible and impoverishing ritualism had been substituted for conformity with the Divine Will.

So lay the world in its blackness and sin; the Incarnation a nullity, the Holy Spirit inoperative, and the Bible ignored or trampled under foot as a hated thing.

Understanding from prophecy the ultimate world-form, it is possible to deduce the various

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

stages of development through which the world must pass in its transition from such a condition into heavenly conformity with the Divine Will. These stages are three in number:

1. The Republication of the "Record."
2. The Perception of the Contents of the "Record."
3. The Appropriation of the Provisions for Holiness therein Revealed.

This is the ultimate scheme of history, and upon its place in this scheme depends the historical importance of any event.

II.

THE REPUBLICATION OF THE RECORD.

The vastness of this stage of development is readily seen from a statement of what it involves. It was necessary, not alone that access be had to the "Record" in question; but to do this the restriction which hampered intellectual activity must be burst asunder, the freed intellect must master a forgotten tongue, must so formulate in each separate country the varying

THE PLACE OF THE METHODIST IDEA.

dialects of inhomogeneous peoples as to express the Record, and in many cases must form alphabet, language, and all; and when these obstacles were overcome, some means must be devised for the multiplication of copies until the great Record was known throughout the earth. And these things were to be accomplished in the face of the antagonism of the high and mighty in every land; it was to be obvious "that the kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed;" all the forces of prejudice, lust, and every form of wickedness were arrayed against the republication of the Book. They who favored and struggled for this end were few and impoverished, feeble in all that is counted strength among men. Such the task, such the difficulties; and yet the task must be attempted and the difficulties overcome before humanity could advance a handbreadth toward its ultimate goal.

Behold the marvelous ways in which God works!

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

1. The thing which "Christendom" most dreaded was divinely used to accomplish what "Christendom" most needed. Constantinople, where alone lived men competent to instruct the Western world in the language in which the Word was written, to the consternation of Christendom, fell before the onslaught of Islam in 1453. In wild flight from the fallen city the Greek scholars sought refuge in the Western countries. Thereupon the Western world went wild over the fad of ancient culture; and men devoted themselves to the mastery of Greek, and the reading of Plato and Homer, all unconscious that in so doing they were making possible the republication of the Divine Record.

2. Under the stimulus of this new culture, men everywhere broke out in revolt against the restriction upon intellect; and in the face of a revolt so universal and spontaneous it became impossible longer to enforce the prohibitions upon intellectual activity.

3. Consequent upon this renaissance of learning came a great hunger, stirring the

THE PLACE OF THE METHODIST IDEA.

newly-aroused manhood; men searched the lore of past ages for a satisfying something, and at last some found it in the musty record of the Incarnation. Scholarship devoted itself to the editing of the Bible, until in every country men began to feel something of its influence, and to turn from ceremonies to spiritual things. Then ensued the awful conflict between the false elements of worship and the truth, out of which the truth came largely triumphant, and the republication of the Bible was accomplished as far as concerned the nations of Northern Europe.

4. But while Northern Europe thus passed from the first stage into the second, the greater portion of the world has been long in emerging from this phase of its development. A policy of rigid suppression of the Divine Record was for centuries enforced in a most sanguinary manner among the Catholic countries of the world. But little by little events have undermined this policy, or destroyed the power of Rome to render it efficacious, until now the re-

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

publication of the Divine Record seems on the eve of accomplishment.

5. Meanwhile the heathen nations remained largely uncared for and unthought of, until in the present century the great missionary movement was used of God to send competent scholars into these foreign lands, who mastering or creating their language rendered into these multitudinous dialects the same blessed revelation, and now at length, when a single year records the publication by a single society, in a single heathen nation, of over half a million copies of the Scripture, we may well conclude that the consummation of this republication is near at hand.

III.

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE RECORD.

This stage already compasses four centuries of time, and though minds of exceeding brilliancy, wide scholarship, and infinite capacity for detail have labored at the task, the end is afar off.

Theological controversy must cease upon the

THE PLACE OF THE METHODIST IDEA.

universal perception of the Divine thought; and until the voices of conflicting schools are merged in harmonious hymns of praise, we may well conclude there are depths unfathomed, and that the key of knowledge still eludes the search of man. It is only necessary to state briefly the historical data which indicate this stage of development.

1. The Reformation did not involve the restoration of Primitive Christianity; for this would be the appropriation of the full provisions for holiness of life; the actual realization of the prayed-for Kingdom of Heaven. This the Reformation did not reproduce. No further testimony is needed upon this point than the controversies among the Reformers themselves, and their antagonism to the clear formula of holiness. Though the Reformation was far from being a re-establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven, what it did accomplish was of vast importance. Wherever it prevailed it made the Bible a common book, and set multitudes of men to earnest study of its contents.

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

2. But it was necessary that these scholars disassociate words from the meanings with which in the lapse of time they had become incumbered, and use the words in their early significance. It was necessary also that the very text itself be cleared of its accumulated corruptions and restored to purity; it was necessary also that the scholars free themselves from the bias of tradition and current conceptions, and yield themselves to the real teachings of the Scriptures. Little by little men have wrought at these tasks, and amid violence of every kind have steadily pursued this purpose, until the real contents of the Scriptures have become increasingly clear. Historically we perceive that this stage comprehends the extensive labors of the textual critics,—now, as concerns the more vital Record, crowned with such great success; it includes the hostile attacks of the extreme higher critics, used of God to abolish prejudices which hindered clear perception, and to accumulate vast treasuries of facts which have lighted up the Divine Word.

THE PLACE OF THE METHODIST IDEA.

It includes also the theological controversies which, with all their bitterness, have indicated the earnest thought of great intellects, and have purged away many errors of doctrine which might have proved fatal. It includes also the numerous practical endeavors to form a working interpretation of the Scripture, until we may indeed consider every believer's life as an illustration of his interpretation, and thus construe the experiences of the Church through these centuries as contributing to a perception of the Divine Record.

3. But, with all that has been accomplished, it must be insisted that the Church of to-day is representative of this stage of the transition; for the criteria which indicate an endeavor to perceive the contents of Scripture are too numerous to be otherwise interpreted. Nor does this detract from the honor due to the several denominations. They grappled with the task at hand, and with heroic devotion gave themselves to its solution. In this they have met with large success, and in consequence their

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

forms and ideas were formed from this very adaptation to the task of interpretation. Methodism, coming later, faced a later and naturally a higher problem.

IV.

APPROPRIATION.

The history of this stage of the transition is yet to be made. It remains so largely unaccomplished that there is little to be written concerning it. The two other stages are essential to this, and until the world shall emerge from them we can not hope for it to enter upon the final stage in the development of the ultimate world-form.

But while this is true of the world as a whole, and of the Church also as a whole, it must be considered that, in the case of individuals, very many have perceived in the "Record" the provisions for holiness, and, appropriating them, have entered into the glories of the Kingdom of Heaven in its ultimate world-form.

We have now sketched world history in es-

THE PLACE OF THE METHODIST IDEA.

sential points, and hence we are now in a position to inquire, "What is the place of the Methodist idea in this world history?"

We might in all propriety consider Methodism as a general spiritual movement away from dogma unto life; but the more limited and easier analyzed Methodism which became organized into specific forms under John Wesley, is more suitable to our purpose. Accordingly we propose to inquire, and to fix with what definiteness the criteria will allow, the place of organized Methodism in world history. The better to do this, we restate one or two of the previously-established conclusions.

1. The ultimate world-form, as expressed in the formula of the Christian prayer, has been seen to be universal holiness of life, or heavenly conformity to the Divine Will.

2. This ultimatum, impossible and inconceivable to the natural mind, was made possible by the consequences wrought by the Incarnate Son and the Holy Spirit.

3. The Record which set forth these pro-

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

visions, though long obscured, was rendered accessible through the Renaissance of learning and the Mediæval Reformation.

4. The centuries since have been marked by endeavors on the part of earnest and learned men to perceive the contents of the Record in question.

5. These contents consisted, above all else, in a setting forth of the provisions for holiness of life.

Such was the world condition when Methodism appeared. Save in isolated and individual cases, holiness of life was confessedly unachieved. In this connection two quotations from the man who was the very head and front of the movement are in point. In setting forth the Principles of a Methodist, and speaking not of theories but of things accomplished, Mr. Wesley writes:

“This man [the Methodist] can testify to all mankind, ‘I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.’ He is ‘holy as God who called him is holy,’

THE PLACE OF THE METHODIST IDEA.

both in heart and in 'all manner of conversation.' He 'loveth the Lord his God with all his heart,' and 'serveth him' 'with all his strength.' He 'loveth his neighbor,' every man, 'as himself;' yea, 'as Christ loveth us;'—them in particular that 'despitefully use him and persecute him,' because they 'know not the Son, neither the Father.' Indeed his soul is all love, filled with 'bowels of mercies, kindness, meekness, gentleness, longsuffering.' And his life agrees thereto, full of 'the work of faith, the patience of hope, and the labor of love,' and 'whatsoever he does in word or deed, he does it all in the name,' in the love and 'power of the Lord Jesus.' In a word, he doeth 'the will of God on earth, as it is done in heaven.' . . . If there be anything unscriptural in these words, anything wild or extravagant, anything contrary to the analogy of faith or the experience of adult Christians, . . . let some one impart to me of the clearer light God has given him."

When it is considered that these words set forth the fundamental principles of the people

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

called Methodists at that period of their history, it becomes obvious, both from the general consideration of the contents of Scripture and the specific fact of the abundance of Scriptural language in which Mr. Wesley clothed his thought, that here was a people who had both perceived the real content of Scripture and appropriated its provisions for holiness of life, and thus, as far as concerned themselves, had achieved the highest spiritual success.

These criteria clearly fix the place of early Methodism in world history; beyond all controversy, it is differentiated from most other forms of Christianity by this achievement of holiness of life, and belongs to the third transition stage. Historically considered, many among the early Methodists attained the ultimate world-form.

In the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church occurs another quotation from Mr. Wesley: "In 1729, two young men in England, reading the Bible, saw that they could not be saved without holiness, followed after it, and incited others to do likewise. In 1737 they saw,

THE PLACE OF THE METHODIST IDEA.

likewise, that men are justified before they are sanctified; but still holiness was their object. God then thrust them out to raise a holy people."

Herein we perceive a further purpose of Methodism. Not content with actualizing holiness of life, it must become a medium whereby the world should pass to its ultimate condition. Nor is this mere assertion. Divine convictions, such as animated the founders of Methodism, do not fade into nothingness; the inspired conception of a world-wide parish became well-nigh realized; and through the labors of these men, made holy by appropriating the provisions revealed in Scripture, the whole world was lifted to a distinctly higher plane. England, sunken in corruption, formalism, and debauchery, was rescued from the logical consequences of the prevalent Deism.

Methodism crossed the seas, and in America wrought wondrous things. A high authority says, respecting the early leaders of this movement, "The early Methodist preachers were especially inspired of God for their work." Mir-

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

acles of regeneration attended their preaching, and holiness of living was realized in the lives of literal thousands. In the light of the tremendous effects produced by the labors of the early Methodists on both sides of the water, we can reach no other conclusion than that the convictions which animated the founders of Methodism were wrought of God, and that it was divinely purposed that Methodism should lift the world into the third transition stage, and be the means of realizing the ultimate world-form.

The sublimity of this conception is dazzling to the mind; but it in no wise disagrees with the glories beyond what have entered into the heart of man, which God has promised to them that love him. We do not concern ourselves with possible imputations of spiritual arrogance; we only insist that historical data, calmly analyzed, find no other logical interpretation than this, that the significance of Methodism consists in the purpose of God thereby to proclaim to the world the abounding provisions for holiness of life revealed in the Scripture, and to lead the

THE PLACE OF THE METHODIST IDEA.

world to appropriate these provisions, and thus to achieve the ultimate kingdom, where the Divine Will is done with heavenly perfectness.

But purpose—even Divine purpose—is not necessarily history; and though given such unparalleled honor and opportunity, Methodism has yet to realize in completed action what it seems has been thus purposed. The crisis of a great decision rests upon the Church. The world struggles with its problem of sin; by far the greater portion of its people—even Christians—believe in a hopeless strife; for them there is no triumphant life until the fetters of the carnal nature are dropped forever. Meanwhile God waits for the people he has raised up to fulfill their function. He waits; but a haze of misconception has veiled the spiritual vision of this peculiar people; holiness has ceased for the time to be their distinctive doctrine, and has in some congregations become an antagonized or even dreaded theme. Misconceptions and false presentations have clouded its glory.

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

God waits; but there are not lacking signs which foretoken an impending spiritual movement of great power. Methodism will not be voiceless concerning her divinely-inspired Gospel. The Spirit speaks all round the world; in the Islands of the Sea, in Asia and Africa, in Europe and the Americas, his voice is heard, and the sons of men are rousing to a sense of the hitherto unguessed provisions of grace. The hour approaches, which for Methodism is the fullness of time.

APPENDIX.

- I. THE ARTICLES OF RELIGION.
- II. THE GENERAL RULES.
- III. ARTICLES OF ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNMENT.

I.

ARTICLES OF RELIGION.

I. OF FAITH IN THE HOLY TRINITY.

THERE is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body or parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the maker and preserver of all things, visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

II. OF THE WORD, OR SON OF GOD, WHO WAS MADE VERY MAN.

The Son, who is the Word of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin; so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided; whereof is one Christ, very God

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

and very Man, who truly suffered, was crucified, dead and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for the actual sins of men.

III. OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

Christ did truly rise again from the dead, and took again his body, with all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature, wherewith he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth until he return to judge all men at the last day.

IV. OF THE HOLY GHOST.

The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God.

V. THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES FOR SALVATION.

The Holy Scriptures contain all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or

APPENDIX.

necessary to salvation. In the name of the Holy Scriptures we do understand those canonical books of the Old and New Testaments of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church. The names of the canonical books are:

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, The First Book of Samuel, The Second Book of Samuel, The First Book of Kings, The Second Book of Kings, The First Book of Chronicles, The Second Book of Chronicles, The Book of Ezra, The Book of Nehemiah, The Book of Esther, The Book of Job, The Psalms, The Proverbs, Ecclesiastes or the Preacher, Cantica or Song of Solomon, Four Prophets the greater, Twelve Prophets the less.

All the books of the New Testament, as they are commonly received, we do receive and account canonical.

VI. OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

The Old Testament is not contrary to the New; for both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ,

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

who is the only Mediator between God and man, being both God and Man. Wherefore they are not to be heard who feign that the old fathers did look only for transitory promises. Although the law given from God by Moses as touching ceremonies and rites doth not bind Christians, nor ought the civil precepts thereof of necessity be received in any commonwealth; yet, notwithstanding, no Christian whatsoever is free from the obedience of the commandments which are called moral.

VII. OF ORIGINAL OR BIRTH SIN.

Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk), but it is the corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually.

VIII. OF FREE WILL.

The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such that he can not turn and prepare himself,

APPENDIX.

by his own natural strength and works, to faith, and calling upon God; wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will.

IX. OF THE JUSTIFICATION OF MAN.

We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, by faith and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort.

X. OF GOOD WORKS.

Although good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, can not put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgments; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and spring out of a true and lively faith, insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree is discerned by its fruit.

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

XI. OF WORKS OF SUPEREROGATION.

Voluntary works—besides, over, and above God's commandments—which are called works of supererogation, can not be taught without arrogancy and impiety. For by them men do declare that they do not only render unto God as much as they are bound to do, but that they do more for his sake than of bounden duty is required: whereas Christ saith plainly, When ye have done all that is commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants.

XII. OF SIN AFTER JUSTIFICATION.

Not every sin willingly committed after justification is the sin against the Holy Ghost, and unpardonable. Wherefore, the grant of repentance is not to be denied to such as fall into sin after justification: after we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace given, and fall into sin, and, by the grace of God, rise again and amend our lives. And therefore they are to be condemned who say they can no more

APPENDIX.

sin as long as they live here; or deny the place of forgiveness to such as truly repent.

XIII. OF THE CHURCH.

The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.

XIV. OF PURGATORY.

The Romish doctrine concerning purgatory, pardon, worshiping, and adoration, as well of images as of relics, and also invocation of saints, is a fond thing, vainly invented, and grounded upon no warrant of Scripture, but repugnant to the Word of God.

XV. OF SPEAKING IN THE CONGREGATION IN SUCH A TONGUE AS THE PEOPLE UNDERSTAND.

It is a thing plainly repugnant to the Word of God, and the custom of the primitive Church, to have public prayer in the Church, or to administer the Sacraments in a tongue not understood by the people.

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

XVI. OF THE SACRAMENTS.

Sacraments ordained of Christ are not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they are certain signs of grace, and God's good will toward us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm, our faith in him.

There are two Sacraments ordained of Christ our Lord in the Gospel; that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord.

Those five commonly called sacraments—that is to say, confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction—are not to be counted for sacraments of the Gospel; being such as have partly grown out of the *corrupt* following of the Apostles, and partly are states of life allowed in the Scriptures, but yet have not the like nature of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, because they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God.

The Sacraments were not ordained of Christ

APPENDIX.

to be gazed upon, or to be carried about ; but that we should duly use them. And in such only as worthily receive the same they have a wholesome effect or operation : but they that receive them unworthily, purchase to themselves condemnation, as St. Paul saith. (1 Cor. xi, 29.)

XVII. OF BAPTISM.

Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference whereby Christians are distinguished from others that are not baptized, but it is also a sign of regeneration or the new birth. The baptism of young children is to be retained in the Church.

XVIII. OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another, but rather is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death ; inso-much that, to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith receive the same, the bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ ; and like-

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

wise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ.

Transubstantiation, or the change of the substance of bread and wine in the Supper of our Lord, can not be proved by Holy Writ, but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.

The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper, only after a heavenly and spiritual manner. And the means whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is faith.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshiped.

XIX. OF BOTH KINDS.

The Cup of the Lord is not to be denied to the Lay People; for both the parts of the Lord's Supper, by Christ's ordinance and commandment, ought to be administered to all Christians alike.

APPENDIX.

XX. OF THE ONE OBLATION OF CHRIST, FINISHED UPON THE CROSS.

The offering of Christ, once made, is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifice of masses, in the which it is commonly said that the priest doth offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, is a blasphemous fable and dangerous deceit.

XXI. OF THE MARRIAGE OF MINISTERS.

The Ministers of Christ are not commanded by God's law either to vow the estate of single life, or to abstain from marriage; therefore it is lawful for them, as for all other Christians, to marry at their own discretion, as they shall judge the same to serve best to godliness.

XXII. OF THE RITES AND CEREMONIES OF CHURCHES.

It is not necessary that rites and ceremonies should in all places be the same, or exactly alike;

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

for they have been always different, and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's Word. Whosoever, through his private judgment, willingly and purposely doth openly break the rites and ceremonies of the Church to which he belongs, which are not repugnant to the Word of God, and are ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly (that others may fear to do the like), as one that offendeth against the common order of the Church, and woundeth the consciences of weak brethren.

Every particular Church may ordain, change, or abolish rites and ceremonies, so that all things may be done to edification.

XXIII. OF THE RULERS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

The President, the Congress, the General Assemblies, the Governors, and the Councils of State, *as the Delegates of the People*, are the Rulers of the United States of America, accord-

APPENDIX.

ing to the division of power made to them by the Constitution of the United States, and by the Constitutions of their respective States. And the said States are a sovereign and independent Nation, and ought not to be subject to any foreign jurisdiction.*

XXIV. OF CHRISTIAN MEN'S GOODS.

The riches and goods of Christians are not common, as touching the right, title, and possession of the same, as some do falsely boast. Notwithstanding, every man ought, of such things as he possesseth, liberally to give alms to the poor, according to his ability.

XXV. OF A CHRISTIAN MAN'S OATH.

As we confess that vain and rash swearing is forbidden Christian men by our Lord Jesus Christ and James his Apostle; so we judge that

*As far as it respects civil affairs we believe it the duty of Christians, and especially of all Christian Ministers, to be subject to the supreme authority of the country where they may reside, and to use all laudable means to enjoin obedience to the powers that be; and therefore it is expected that all our Preachers and People, who may be under the British or any other Government, will behave themselves as peaceable and orderly subjects.

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

the Christian religion doth not prohibit, but that a man may swear when the magistrate requireth, in a cause of faith and charity, so it be done according to the Prophet's teaching, in justice, judgment, and truth.

II.

THE GENERAL RULES.

THE NATURE, DESIGN, AND GENERAL RULES OF OUR UNITED SOCIETIES.*

In the latter end of the year 1739 eight or ten persons who appeared to be deeply convinced of sin, and earnestly groaning for redemption, came to Mr. Wesley in London. They desired, as did two or three more the next day, that he would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come, which they saw continually hanging over

*The United Societies founded in this country by the apostolic Asbury and his colaborers were, in 1784, organized into the Methodist Episcopal Church. But in this chapter, and occasionally elsewhere in the Discipline, the words *Society* and *Societies* are retained as the equivalent of the words *Church* and *Churches*, both as a convenience, and as a memorial of our early ecclesiastical life.

APPENDIX.

their heads. That he might have more time for this great work, he appointed a day when they might all come together; which from thenceforward they did every week, namely, on *Thursday*, in the evening. To these and as many more as desired to join with them (for their number increased daily), he gave those advices from time to time which he judged most needful for them; and they always concluded their meeting with prayer suited to their several necessities.

This was the rise of the UNITED SOCIETY, first in Europe, and then in America. Such a society is no other than “*a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation.*”

That it may the more easily be discerned whether they are indeed working out their own salvation, each Society is divided into smaller companies, called Classes, according to their re-

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

spective places of abode. There are about twelve persons in a Class, one of whom is styled *the Leader*. It is his duty—

§ 1. To see each person in his class once a week at least; in order, (1) To inquire how his soul prospers. (2) To advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion may require. (3) To receive what he is willing to give toward the relief of the Ministers, Church, and poor.*

§ 2. To meet the Ministers and the Stewards of the Society once a week; in order, (1) To inform the Minister of any that are sick, or of any that walk disorderly and will not be re-proved. (2) To pay the Stewards what he has received of his Class in the week preceding.

There is only one condition previously required of those who desire admission into these Societies—"a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins." But wherever this is really fixed in the soul it will be shown by its fruits.

*This part refers to towns and cities, where the poor are generally numerous and Church expenses considerable.

APPENDIX.

It is therefore expected of all who continue therein that they shall continue to evidence their desire of salvation—

First: By doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind, especially that which is most generally practiced; such as—

The taking of the name of God in vain.

The profaning the day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary work therein or by buying or selling.

Drunkenness, buying or selling spirituous liquors, or drinking them, unless in cases of extreme necessity.

Slaveholding; buying or selling slaves.

Fighting, quarreling, brawling, brother going to law with brother; returning evil for evil, or railing for railing; the using many words in buying or selling.

The buying or selling goods that have not paid the duty.

The giving or taking things on usury—that is, unlawful interest.

Uncharitable or unprofitable conversation;

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

particularly speaking evil of Magistrates or of Ministers.

Doing to others as we would not they should do unto us.

Doing what we know is not for the glory of God, as—

The putting on of gold and costly apparel.

The taking such diversions as can not be used in the name of the Lord Jesus.

The singing those songs, or reading those books, which do not tend to the knowledge or love of God.

Softness and needless self-indulgence.

Laying up treasure upon earth.

Borrowing without a probability of paying;
or taking up goods without a probability of paying for them.

It is expected of all who continue in these Societies that they shall continue to evidence their desire of salvation—

Second: By doing good; by being in every kind merciful after their power; as they have

APPENDIX.

opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and, as far as possible, to all men :

To their bodies of the ability which God giveth, by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping them that are sick or in prison :

To their souls, by instructing, reproving, or exhorting all we have any intercourse with; trampling under foot that enthusiastic doctrine, that “we are not to do good unless *our hearts be free to it.*”

By doing good, especially to them that are of the household of faith or groaning so to be; employing them preferably to others; buying one of another; helping each other in business; and so much the more because the world will love its own, and them *only*.

By all possible diligence and frugality, that the Gospel be not blamed.

By running with patience the race which is set before them, denying themselves, and taking up their cross daily; submitting to bear the re-

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

proach of Christ, to be as the filth and offscouring of the world; and looking that men should say all manner of evil of them *falsely*, for the Lord's sake.

It is expected of all who desire to continue in these Societies that they shall continue to evidence their desire of salvation—

Third: By attending upon all the ordinances of God; such are—

The public worship of God;

The ministry of the word, either read or expounded;

The Supper of the Lord;

Family and private prayer;

Searching the Scriptures;

Fasting or abstinence.

These are the General Rules of our Societies; all which we are taught of God to observe, even in his written word, which is the only rule, and the sufficient rule, both of our faith and practice. And all these we know his Spirit writes on truly awakened hearts. If there be any among us who observes them not, who habitually breaks

APPENDIX.

any of them, let it be known unto them who watch over that soul as they who must give an account. We will admonish him of the error of his ways. We will bear with him for a season. But if then he repent not, he hath no more place among us. We have delivered our own souls.

III.

ARTICLES OF ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNMENT.

PART I.

PASTORAL CHARGES, QUARTERLY AND ANNUAL CONFERENCES.

ARTICLE I. *Pastoral Charges*.—Members of the Church shall be divided into local Societies, one or more of which shall constitute a Pastoral Charge.

ARTICLE II. *Quarterly Conferences*. — A Quarterly Conference shall be organized in each Pastoral Charge, and be composed of such persons and have such powers as the General Conference may direct.

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

ARTICLE III. *Annual Conferences.*—The Traveling Preachers shall be organized by the General Conference into Annual Conferences, the sessions of which they are required to attend.

PART II.

THE GENERAL CONFERENCE.

ARTICLE I. *How Composed.*—The General Conference shall be composed of Ministerial and Lay Delegates, to be chosen as hereinafter provided.

ARTICLE II. *Ministerial Delegates.*—§ 1. Each Annual Conference shall be entitled to at least one Ministerial Delegate. The General Conference shall not allow more than one Ministerial Delegate for every fourteen members of an Annual Conference, nor less than one for every forty-five; but for a fraction of two-thirds or more of the number fixed by the General Conference as the ratio of representation an Annual Conference shall be entitled to an additional Delegate.

§ 2. The Ministerial Delegates shall be elected

APPENDIX.

by ballot by the members of the Annual Conference at its session immediately preceding the General Conference. Such Delegates shall be Elders, at least twenty-five years of age, and shall have been members of an Annual Conference four successive years, and at the time of their election and at the time of the session of the General Conference shall be members of the Annual Conference which elected them. An Annual Conference may elect Reserve Delegates, not exceeding three in number, and not exceeding the number of its Delegates.

§ 3. No minister shall be counted twice in the same year in the basis for the election of Delegates to the General Conference, nor vote in such election where he is not counted, nor vote in two Conferences in the same year on a constitutional question.

ARTICLE III. *Lay Delegates.*—§ 1. A Lay Electoral Conference shall be constituted quadrennially, or whenever duly called by the General Conference, within the bounds of each Annual Conference, for the purpose of electing

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

Lay Delegates to the General Conference, and for the purpose of voting on constitutional changes. It shall be composed of lay members, one from each Pastoral Charge within its bounds, chosen by the lay members of the Charge over twenty-one years of age, in such manner as the General Conference may determine. Each Pastoral Charge shall also elect in the same manner one Reserve Delegate. Members not less than twenty-one years of age, and holding membership in the Pastoral Charges electing them, are eligible to membership in the Lay Electoral Conference.

§ 2. The Lay Electoral Conference shall assemble at the seat of the Annual Conference on the first Friday of the session immediately preceding the General Conference, unless the General Conference shall provide otherwise.

§ 3. The Lay Electoral Conference shall organize by electing a President and Secretary, shall adopt its own Rules of Order, and shall be the judge of the election, returns, and qualifications of its own members.

APPENDIX.

§ 4. Each Lay Electoral Conference shall be entitled to elect as many Delegates to the General Conference as there are Ministerial Delegates from the Annual Conference. A Lay Electoral Conference may elect Reserve Delegates, not exceeding three in number, and not exceeding the number of its Delegates. These elections shall be by ballot.

§ 5. Lay members twenty-five years of age, or over, holding membership in Pastoral Charges within the bounds of the Lay Electoral Conference, and having been lay members of the Church five years next preceding, shall be eligible to election to the General Conference. Delegates-elect who cease to be members of the Church within the bounds of the Lay Electoral Conference by which they were elected shall not be entitled to seats in the General Conference.

ARTICLE IV. *Credentials*.—The Secretaries of the several Annual and Lay Electoral Conferences shall furnish certificates of election to the Delegates severally, and send a certificate of such election to the Secretary of the preceding

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

General Conference immediately after the adjournment of said Annual or Lay Electoral Conference.

ARTICLE V. *Sessions.* — § 1. The General Conference shall meet at 10 o'clock on the morning of the first Wednesday in the month of May, in every fourth year from the date of the first Delegated General Conference — namely, the year of our Lord 1812—and at such place in the United States of America as shall have been determined by the preceding General Conference, or by a Commission to be appointed quadrennially by the General Conference, and acting under its authority; which Commission shall have power also in case of emergency to change the place for the meeting of the General Conference, a majority of the General Superintendents concurring in such change.

§ 2. The General Superintendents, or a majority of them, by and with the advice of two-thirds of all the Annual Conferences, shall have the power to call an extra session of the General

APPENDIX.

Conference at any time, constituted in the usual way; such session to be held at such time and place as a majority of the General Superintendents, and also of the above Commission, shall designate.

§ 3. In case of a great emergency two-thirds of the General Superintendents may call special sessions of the Annual Conferences, at such time and place as they may think wise, to determine the question of an extra session of the General Conference, or to elect Delegates thereto. They may also, in such cases, call extra sessions of the Lay Electoral Conferences for the purpose of electing Lay Delegates to the General Conference.

ARTICLE VI. *Presiding Officers.*—§ 1. The General Conference shall elect by ballot from among the Traveling Elders as many General Superintendents as it may deem necessary.

§ 2. The General Superintendents shall preside in the General Conference in such order as they may determine; but if no General Super-

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

intendent be present, the General Conference shall elect one of its members to preside *pro tempore*.

§ 3. The presiding officer of the General Conference shall decide questions of order, subject to an appeal to the General Conference; but questions of law shall be decided by the General Conference.

ARTICLE VII. *Organization.* — When the time for opening the General Conference arrives the presiding officer shall take the chair, and direct the Secretary of the preceding General Conference, or in his absence one of his assistants, to call the roll of the Delegates-elect. Those who have been duly returned shall be recognized as members, their certificates of election being *prima facie* evidence of their right to membership; *provided*, however, that in case of a challenge of any person thus enrolled, such challenge being signed by at least six Delegates from the territory of as many different Annual Conferences, three such Delegates being ministers, and three laymen, the person so chal-

APPENDIX.

lenged shall not participate in the proceedings of the General Conference, except to speak on his own case, until the question of his right shall have been decided. The General Conference shall be the judge of the election, returns, and qualifications of its own members.

ARTICLE VIII. *Quorum*.—When the General Conference is in session it shall require the presence of two-thirds of the whole number of Delegates to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business; but a less number may take a recess or adjourn from day to day in order to secure a quorum, and at the final session may approve the Journal, order the record of the roll-call, and adjourn *sine die*.

ARTICLE IX. *Voting*.—The Ministerial and Lay Delegates shall deliberate together as one body. They shall also vote together as one body with the following exception: A separate vote shall be taken on any question when requested by one-third of either order of Delegates present and voting. In all cases of separate voting it shall require the concurrence of the two orders

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

to adopt the proposed measure; except that for changes of the Constitution a vote of two-thirds of the General Conference shall be sufficient, as provided in Article XI.

ARTICLE X. *Powers and Restrictions.*—The General Conference shall have full power to make rules and regulations for the Church under the following limitations and restrictions, namely:

§ 1. The General Conference shall not revoke, alter, nor change our Articles of Religion, nor establish any new standards or rules of doctrine contrary to our present existing and established standards of doctrine.

§ 2. The General Conference shall not organize nor authorize the organization of an Annual Conference with less than twenty-five members.

§ 3. The General Conference shall not change nor alter any part or rule of our government so as to do away Episcopacy, nor destroy the plan of our itinerant General Superintendency; but may elect a Missionary Bishop or Superintendent for any of our foreign Missions. limiting

APPENDIX.

his Episcopal jurisdiction to the same respectively.

§ 4. The General Conference shall not revoke nor change the General Rules of our Church.

§ 5. The General Conference shall not deprive our ministers of the right of trial by the Annual Conference, or by a select number thereof, nor of an appeal; nor shall it deprive our members of the right of trial by a committee of members of our Church, nor of an appeal.

§ 6. The General Conference shall not appropriate the produce of the Book Concern, nor of the Chartered Fund, to any purpose other than for the benefit of the Traveling, Supernumerary, and Superannuated Preachers, their wives, widows, and children.

ARTICLE XI. *Amendments.*—The concurrent recommendation of two-thirds of all the members of the several Annual Conferences present and voting, and of two-thirds of all the members of the Lay Electoral Conferences present and voting, shall suffice to authorize the next ensuing General Conference by a two-thirds vote

GENIUS OF METHODISM.

to alter or amend any of the provisions of this Constitution excepting § 1, Article X; and also, whenever such alteration or amendment shall have been first recommended by the General Conference by a two-thirds vote, then so soon as two-thirds of all the members of the several Annual Conferences present and voting, and two-thirds of all the members of the Lay Electoral Conferences present and voting, shall have concurred therein, such alteration or amendment shall take effect; and the result of the vote shall be announced by the General Superintendents.

